

**GOD'S HISTORY IN THE THEOLOGY OF  
JÜRGEN MOLTMANN**

Siu-Kwong Tang

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews



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**God's History in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann**

A thesis submitted to the University of St. Andrews  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Divinity

1994

Siu-Kwong Tang  
Department of Divinity



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## Abstract

It is true that Jürgen Moltmann does not systematically construct a theology of God's history. However, his theological discussion of different themes and doctrines shows that God has a history. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to give an analysis to his theology of God's history and historicity.

Moltmann starts his theology by contrasting God's self-revelation in the promise with that in the epiphany of the eternal present. Chapter 1 traces revelation as epiphany in the Canaanite religion, Parmenides' philosophy and contemporary doctrine of revelation and analyses its analogical characteristic. Revelation as promise is scrutinised in chapter 2 so as to display its dialectical structure, significance and offer a background for further understanding of God's self-revelation in the Christ event.

The analogical principle of knowledge and its use in Platonic philosophy and Thomas Aquinas' natural theology which Moltmann heavily criticises is discussed in chapter 3. Its ontological and epistemological character that makes God's self-revelation and being ahistorical is to be emphasised. In contrast to the analogical principle Moltmann proposes the dialectical principle which is embodied in the Christ event. Its meaning and significance for God's history is the subject of chapter 4.

Chapter 5 and 6 engage in Moltmann's revolution in the relationship between God's historical act in the cross event and his inner being, the economic trinity and the immanent trinity. Chapter 5 clarifies the relationship of the cross event to the inner divine life and relevant criticism while chapter 6 explicates the primary determination of God's inner life to his outer act in history. Moreover, God as love in Moltmann's theology is given a detailed examination in regard to God's self-limitation and self-de-limitation in eternity and in history.

Moltmann's understanding of God's history in the Christ event creates conditions for historical transformation of this world. This is discussed in chapter 7. This thesis is concluded in chapter 8 with an analytical summary of Moltmann's approach to God's history, the character of God's history and God's historicity, and an appreciative appraisal of Moltmann's theological breakthroughs and insights.

## Preface

First of all, I would like to express my grateful thanks to Prof. Richard J. Bauckham for his persistent, close supervision and positive, constructive comments on my work on Jürgen Moltmann's theology since the first year of my study in Manchester University on. And I am indebted to Jonathan Tsoi and Charis Hui for their help collecting and copying theological materials in Leuven, Belgium and Hong Kong respectively. I am very grateful for the financial assistance from my mother church - Mongkok Baptist Church, North Point Baptist Church, China Graduate School of Theology and World Evangelical Fellowship. Their generous offering of grant and scholarship covers a large portion of living expenses and overseas tuition of these three years in Britain so that I can concentrate on my studying without any worry. The last but not the least, I must thank my wife, Ida, for her fully spiritual support and especially her effort of keeping our home comfortable and cosy for my working on the thesis, chatting with friends at the dining table and resting in my bed.



## Introduction

God's history is a thread, if not the thread, in understanding Jürgen Moltmann's theology. It is true that Moltmann's theological development can be divided into two different stages,<sup>1</sup> that is, the whole of theology in one focal point (his great trilogy *Theology of Hope, The Crucified God* and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*) and the part as a contribution to the whole (his *Messianic Theology*). However, the perspective of such an understanding of this feature of Moltmann's theology is methodological rather than material. Once Moltmann's whole works are read through, one will find that God's history is a prominent feature pervading his theological discussion of different themes and doctrines.

R. Bauckham observes that Moltmann "regards the earlier trilogy as preparatory work" for his *Messianic Theology*.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Moltmann's earlier trilogy "provides the foundation on which he can build in the form of more detailed studies of major doctrines".<sup>3</sup> Likewise, concretely, Moltmann's earlier trilogy can be seen as the

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<sup>1</sup> *HTG*, p.168; J. Moltmann, "Foreword" in R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), pp.ix-x.

<sup>2</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

theological foundation of God's history while his *Messianic Theology* is not merely being developed against this background but also in turn supplements with further and detailed explication and development of God's history from different doctrines.

In a word, although Moltmann does not yet systematically construct a theology of God's history, this feature of God's history permeates his theological development. Therefore, this thesis aims to offer an analysis of his theology of God's history and historicity by starting with the question: Under what conditions or in what contexts is God's history initiated?

Basically, this study can be divided into three parts. The first part consists of chapters 1-4 focusing on the historical character of God's self-revelation whereas the second part comprises chapters 5 and 6 discussing the relationship between God's inner divine life and his historical act, especially in the Christ event. Chapter 7 is the third part, in which the significance of God's history for the historical transformation of this world is explicated. Finally, chapter 8 is a conclusion giving an analytical summary and appreciative appraisal of Moltmann's theology.

## 1 Revealing in the Epiphany

### 1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Conditions for God's History

Does God have a history? "... Moltmann's theology as a whole is impregnated with a sense that God has a history ..." says J. B. Webster in an article discussing Moltmann's *The Crucified God*.<sup>1</sup> What Webster says is not that Moltmann's theology is something about God's history as such, but that in his theology God's history is implied. Surely, Moltmann does not discuss God's history as such, but talks of it under certain conditions or in certain contexts. Nevertheless, for Moltmann, God has a history. If God really has a history, then a question should be answered: Under what conditions or in what contexts is God's history initiated? In *Theology of Hope*, obviously, God's history emerges in the context of his revealing the future of the world in his promise. Then, first of all, God's history cannot be separated from his revelation to the world in Moltmann's theology. This is the epistemological condition. A further question can be asked: What is God's being that allows him to reveal himself in this way in which his history is being initiated? In other words, how is the epistemological condition that initiates

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1 J. B. Webster, "Jurgen Moltmann: Trinity and Suffering", *Evangel* 3/2 (1985), p.4.

God's history possible, in regard to God's own being? This is about ontology asking the conditions of possibility for such a revelation.

## 1.2 Two Ways of Revelation

In his *Theology of Hope* Moltmann discusses the contrast between epiphany religions and the biblical religion of promise.<sup>2</sup> As analyzed by C. Morse, Moltmann's overall strategy of argument in *Theology of Hope* is that "the ideas which he affirms are explained by contrasting them with those which he refutes" with the form "not that, but this."<sup>3</sup> The whole of *Theology of Hope* is based on his rejection of epiphany religions but affirmation of the biblical religion of promise.<sup>4</sup>

What makes the religion of the promise different from that of the epiphany? Profiting from his contemporary studies of Old Testament and comparative religion, Moltmann does not understand that by taking "revelation" as the criterion of distinction so as to label them as "natural religion" and "revealed religion". First of all, the

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<sup>2</sup> TH, pp.42-43, 95-101.

<sup>3</sup> C. Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p.27.

<sup>4</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.27.

examination in the field of comparative religion finds out that the "epiphany religions" around Israel are all "religions of revelation" in their own way.<sup>5</sup> "Any place in the world can become the epiphany of the divine and the pictorial transparency of the deity."<sup>6</sup> The contrasting concepts of "revelation" and "natural" are not adequate to be applied to understand their essential difference.

Moltmann criticizes the way in which those theologians begin their examination of revelation from a formal notion of revelation as "*the disclosure of what is concealed*" or "*the manifestation of what is hidden*".<sup>7</sup> Both R. Bultmann and K. Barth are criticized as formalist in their understanding of God's revelation.<sup>8</sup> They both derive the theological content of "revelation" from the word "revelation".<sup>9</sup> Bultmann understands by revelation "the disclosure of what is veiled, the opening up of what is hidden."<sup>10</sup> Barth says the same: "A closed door is opened;

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<sup>5</sup> TH, p.43.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.42.

<sup>7</sup> G. O'Collins, "Spes Quaerens Intellectum", *Interpretation* 22 (1968), p.40.

<sup>8</sup> TH, p.44.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> R. Bultmann, *Existence and Faith: Short Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. S.M. Ogden (London: Collins, 1964), p.68.

a cover removed. A light shines in the darkness, a question finds its answer, a puzzle its solution."<sup>11</sup>

In Moltmann's view, they both do not first ask "what is the reference and bearing of the revelations of God in the Old and New Testaments",<sup>12</sup> but "set out from a general explanation of terms".<sup>13</sup> In other words, they do not, from the very beginning, distinguish the revelation of the biblical religion from that of the epiphany religions. Consequently, the Christian doctrine of revelation, in both their hands, is turned into the proofs of God. For Bultmann, revelation is understood within the framework of a new proof of God from human existence.<sup>14</sup> For Barth, the self-revelation of God is the ontological proof of God himself.<sup>15</sup> The doctrine of revelation, then, belongs either to anthropology -- as an answer to the question of God as asked by humanity and given along with the questionableness of human existence -- or to the doctrine of God -- as an answer to the proofs of God or to the proof of his non-provability.<sup>16</sup> Moltmann concludes:

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<sup>11</sup> K. Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings 1946-52*, trans. E.M. Delacour and S. Godman (London: SCM, 1954), p.205.

<sup>12</sup> *TH*, p.45.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Cf. TH*, pp.43, 45.

Two little attention is paid to the fact that the expressions for "revelation" in the biblical scriptures have completely broken out of their original religious context and are employed with a meaning of a different kind. This different kind of meaning<sup>17</sup> is mainly determined by the events of promise.

Therefore, the crucial point Moltmann emphasizes is that:

the difference does not lie already in the assertion of divine 'revelation' as such, but in the different ways of conceiving and speaking of the revelation and self-manifestation of the deity.<sup>18</sup>

The theology of the Old Testament shows that "the words and statements about the 'revealing of God' in the Old Testament are combined throughout with statements about the 'promise of God'".<sup>19</sup> God's revelation and his promise, then are not separable from each other. Moltmann goes further: "God reveals himself in the form of promise and in the history that is marked by promise."<sup>20</sup>

In this way, the distinction between the biblical religion and the epiphany religions is proposed to lie in the different ways of God's self-manifestation. Then, what are the characteristics of these two different ways of revelation? How do they view the history of the world? What kind of God and his "history" will they lead to? In the following sections these respects will be studied first

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<sup>17</sup> TH, p.45.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.42.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

through the examination of the Canaanite religion, Greek philosophy and the theologies of Barth, Bultmann and W. Pannenberg.

### 1.3 Revelation as Epiphany

In Moltmann's view, the way of revealing by epiphany is first expressed in the religion of the Canaanite peasant.<sup>21</sup> And later, this epiphany religion "forms the presupposition and the abiding foundation of the natural theology of Greek philosophy of religion, and of oriental philosophies of religion".<sup>22</sup> In contemporary theology, the forms of thinking of Barth and Bultmann on revelation and eschatology "are entirely the thought forms of the Greek mind, which sees in the *logos* the epiphany of the eternal present of being and finds the truth in that".<sup>23</sup> Even Pannenberg's ideas of revelation and eschatology cannot avoid being criticized as the extension of the Greek cosmic theology<sup>24</sup> and remaining within the thought structure of Greek cosmic theology in principle.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp.98-99.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.79.



Through Greek philosophy, the world-view of the Canaanite religion gets its philosophical expression, especially in Parmenides' philosophy of God, on the one hand, and it influences the Christian theological tradition, even into the twentieth century, on the other hand. "Wherever revelation and eschatology are interpreted with reference to the eternal in the present,... a theological equivalent to epiphany religion is to be seen".<sup>26</sup> It is therefore very important to trace such a development in understanding the essence of this kind of revelation.

#### 1.3.1 The Canaanite Religion

According to Moltmann, the uniqueness of Israel's religion emerges in the process of tense struggle with the religion of Canaan throughout its history in Palestine.<sup>27</sup> In the view of V. Maag, the former is the nomadic religion whereas the latter is the peasant religion.<sup>28</sup> It seems to Maag that the distinction between these two religions is due to their different forms of living when he says: "Nomadic religion is a religion of promise. The nomad does not live within the cycle of seed-time and harvest, but in

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<sup>26</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.28.

<sup>27</sup> *TH*, p.96.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

the world of migration."<sup>29</sup> However, as noted by Moltmann, this cannot explain the fact that "when Israel passed from the nomadic and semi-nomadic life to the settled life of Canaan it did not ... abandon the nomad religion and the God of promise" in favour of the gods of Canaanite religion.<sup>30</sup> Moltmann points out that the crucial key to the process of conflict of these two religions is seen very clearly in the relationship to God, and here in turn in the ideas of the appearing and revealing of God.<sup>31</sup> It is their conceptions of God's disclosure that determine their difference, not the life forms.

Essentially, the religion of Canaan is a kind of hierophany. According to M. Eliade, "hierophany"

refers to any manifestation of the sacred in whatever object throughout history. Whether the sacred appear in a stone, a tree, or an incarnate human being, a hierophany denotes the same act: a reality of an entirely different order than those of this world becomes manifest in an object that is part of the natural or profane sphere.<sup>32</sup>

"But these revelations occurred in *mythical time*, at the extratemporal instant of the beginning;...everything in a certain sense coincided with the beginning of the world,

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<sup>29</sup> Cited from *TH*, p.96.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> M. Eliade and L. E. Sullivan, "Hierophany", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol.6, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1987), p.313.

with the cosmogony."<sup>33</sup> Reality, then, is viewed as the primordial totality which comprises the primordiality and the totality.<sup>34</sup> And hierophany is the disclosure of this absolute extratemporal beginning of everything. Accordingly, God's disclosure of himself, in such a religion, is in a way of ahistorical appearing through something, some place or somebody which is present. Every hierophany is a repetition of the very first beginning. The revelation of God, then, is the epiphany of the eternal present, the absolute beginning.

This kind of religion has a view of double tracks of time, namely, profane time and sacred or mythical time. These two times are heterogeneous. The sacred time is a time "of the modality of the gods, which is coupled with immortality"<sup>35</sup> whereas the profane time is a time "of the modality of human being, which is coupled with death".<sup>36</sup>

To the people of epiphany religion, life in profane time is without meaning because it is in the state of "becoming".<sup>37</sup> He tends to set himself in opposition to

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<sup>33</sup> M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. W. R. Trask (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), p.105.

<sup>34</sup> M. Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp.79, 80, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, p.36.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.35.

history, regarded as a succession of events that are irreversible, unforeseeable, possessed of autonomous value.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, from the point of view of ahistorical people, "suffering" is equivalent to "history".<sup>39</sup> It is thereby very important for him to break through the profane time and participate in the sacred time, so as to "find the meaning of life not in historical change but in contact with changeless eternity",<sup>40</sup> on the one hand, and to overcome the threat to human existence from the forces of chaos and of annihilation through the epiphany of the eternal present,<sup>41</sup> on the other hand.

"A hierophany marks a breakthrough from profane to magico-religious time."<sup>42</sup> It may be repeated by rituals which "re-create the conditions of the world in which the sacred originally appeared, and at that moment when the sacred manifests itself again in the same way, extraordinary power overwhelms the profane succession of time".<sup>43</sup> Profane time, duration and history are all abolished and humanity returns to the very beginning in this hierophany. However, the eternal present reality

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.97, n.2.

<sup>40</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.27.

<sup>41</sup> TH, p.99.

<sup>42</sup> Eliade and Sullivan, "Hierophany", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol.6, p.315.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

breaks through the chaos and discloses itself. Consequently, time is regenerated from profane to sacred again and again through rituals, rites and festivals. Its irreversibility is annulled by this eternal return or cyclic recurrence. The past is but a prefiguration of the future while the future is a repetition of the past. Consequently, nothing new happens in the world.<sup>44</sup>

In hierophany, God reveals himself in the eternal present so that humanity can live in a continuous present against the continuous changing of the world. The history of the world, then, is being totally devalued because, in the epiphany religion, reality is seen as the primordial totality, which is eternal present, not historical.

### 1.3.2 Parmenides' Concept of Being<sup>45</sup>

Being the founder of the Eleatic School from a philosophical and historical view,<sup>46</sup> Parmenides argues against the reality of change and is believed to be the first Greek to reach the notion of atemporal eternity.<sup>47</sup> He

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<sup>44</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, pp.89-90.

<sup>45</sup> For an excellent account of Parmenides' philosophy, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol.II: *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp.1-79.

<sup>46</sup> F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol.I: *Greece and Rome* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1956), p.47.

<sup>47</sup> L. Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.175.

offers a philosophical grounding for the view-point of unchangeable reality and against the perspective of changeable, which are expressed in terms of hierophany in epiphany religion, so as to protect the self-identity without difference of Being.<sup>48</sup>

In his poem, Parmenides speaks of three ways of inquiring into truth. The first is "that it is, and it is not possible for it not to be".<sup>49</sup> The second is "that it is not, and that it is bound not to be".<sup>50</sup> The third way is that "to be and not to be are regarded as the same and not the same".<sup>51</sup> Parmenides' criterion of discerning the right way amongst these three is that "one should both say and think that Being is; for to be is possible, and nothingness is not possible".<sup>52</sup> The existence of Being, then, must be thinkable, since "for the Greek the faculty of thought (*Nous*) involves immediate apprehension of an object, the existence of which was presupposed by its very operation."<sup>53</sup> But "nothing cannot be the object of speech or thought, for to speak about nothing is not to speak, and

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.181.

<sup>49</sup> K. Freeman, *Ancillia to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), p.42, frg. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.43, frg. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> J. B. Wilbur and H. J. Allen ed., *The Worlds of the Early Greek Philosophers* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1979), p.104.

to think about nothing is the same as not thinking at all",<sup>54</sup> It is because nothing as a non-existent object of thought becomes a contradiction in terms.<sup>55</sup> In this case, the second way is ruled out. Being (existence) and non-Being (nothing, non-existence) contradict one another, and must mutually exclude each other.

The third way, for Parmenides, is the beliefs of mortals<sup>56</sup>, false but popular. It treats existence and non-existence as the same and as not the same. They are the same because things sometimes exist and sometimes do not (that is, there is change), and some things exist which contain less of being than others and therefore contain some non-existence (that is, there is difference). They are not the same because they have different meanings.<sup>57</sup> In Parmenides' view, this is intolerable: "for this (view) can never predominate, that which is not exists".<sup>58</sup> The reason for ruling it out is based on the mutual exclusiveness of the first way and the second way: "it is, or it is not",<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol.I, p.49.

<sup>55</sup> Wilbur and Allen, *The Worlds of the Early Greek Philosophers*, p.104.

<sup>56</sup> Freeman, *Ancillia to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.43, frg. 6.

<sup>57</sup> D. J. Furley, "Parmenides of Elea", in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* vol.5, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), p.48.

<sup>58</sup> Freeman, *Ancillia to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.43, frg. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., frg. 8.

either existence or non-existence but not both. If the second way is false, then it is not possible for the third way which combines the first and the second to be true.

W. Jaeger asks: "Why does Parmenides pose the sharp alternatives of Being and Not-being at the outset as basic for his whole doctrine?"<sup>60</sup> Obviously, the setting of Being and non-Being is for the purpose of denial of a *tertium Quid* between Being and non-Being. Owing to the structure of "both is and is not" of the third way, it is necessary to deny firstly the existence of non-Being, so as to falsify the third way by the logical principle: "it is, or it is not". Parmenides' central concern is the eternity of identity and the impossibility of difference of Being.<sup>61</sup> He cannot allow that change happens from Being to non-Being and from non-Being to Being because it would violate the law of identity.<sup>62</sup> The great fragment 8 is precisely on the permanent identity of Being:

Being has no coming-into-being and no destruction, for it is whole of limb, without motion, and without end. And it never was, nor will be, because it is now, a whole all together, one, continuous; for what creation of it will you look for?...<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), pp.100-101.

<sup>61</sup> Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays*, p.181.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.188.

<sup>63</sup> Freeman, *Ancillia to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p.43.



It is here Moltmann<sup>64</sup> and other scholars<sup>65</sup> claim that Parmenides' Being is a kind of eternal present.<sup>66</sup>

Parmenides, in fragment 8, "tries to deduce a number of the essential attributes of that which truly is".<sup>67</sup> His argument proceeds on the assertion of the non-existence of non-Being and the principle of excluded middle: "it is, or it is not".<sup>68</sup> However, what he wants to demonstrate are merely the negative predicates of Being which is ungenerated, imperishable, homogeneous, continuous, immovable, unchangeable, complete, and unique.<sup>69</sup> These predicates deny all the positive attributes that would imply the existence of non-Being<sup>70</sup> so as to exclude all

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<sup>64</sup> TH, p.28.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Taran, *Parmenides*, p.175, n.1.

<sup>66</sup> There are different view-points amongst scholars of Parmenides on the issue of whether he reaches the concept of "eternal present" in the sense of timelessness. The crucial point is about the interpretation of frg. 8.5.: either elimination of duration in favour of eternal present or maintaining duration in which Being is infinite in respect of time. The former is atemporal eternity whereas the latter is infinite everlasting duration. However, the former is prevailing amongst scholars and it is accepted to interpret Parmenides' concept of Being in this study. Bibliography on this, see D. Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea, Fragments: A Text and Translation with an Introduction* (Toronto/Buffalo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p.34, n.39.

<sup>67</sup> Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*, p.101.

<sup>68</sup> Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays*, p.192.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.193.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

difference within Being itself.<sup>71</sup> In other words, starting with the concept of Being itself, Parmenides proves the self-identity of Being as non-difference with itself. He affirms Being as an all which is one,<sup>72</sup> that is, it is a non-differential totality. It has no imperfections and lacks nothing. Then, "the true concept of reality excludes motion, change, and becoming".<sup>73</sup> This is the way of truth.

When Parmenides claims that "it never was, nor will be, because it is now, a whole all together", he is asserting the atemporality of Being. From the very beginning, Parmenides has to deny the possibility of the co-existence of Being and non-Being so as to rule out difference, which would make process from Being to non-Being and vice versa possible. In this way, Being is not something in process with any change. If time is understood in terms of process and Being is not in process, then Being is timeless. Therefore, Moltmann says that "this 'being' does not exist 'always'... It has no extension in time".<sup>74</sup> So, "it never was, nor will be". Moreover, Being is a simple totality without differentiation in any sense. It is a whole all together, one. Because of its perfection, it

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>72</sup> J. V. Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p.53.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> TH, p.28.

involves no temporal succession of earlier and later. Past and future tense does not apply to it.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, "it is now". Its now is a perfect one out of time, the eternal present.

Parmenides' Being, then, is characterized as timeless, eternal present firstly because it is a simple and perfect totality.

There are several points in Parmenides' argument and conclusion that are noteworthy. Firstly, Being is revealed in and determined by thought. Parmenides' whole argument manifests fully his famous fragment 3: "it is the same thing to think and to be". Therefore, the existence and the content of Being are disclosed by the nature of thought that existence must be thinkable and Being's content is that of thought, that is, the three principles of thinking, which are the ways Being discloses itself.

Secondly, non-Being is ruled out and becoming is impossible. By the principle of being thinkable, non-Being is being denied. By the principles of excluded middle and non-contradiction, and the non-existence of non-Being, "both is and is not" is falsified. In this way, non-Being is not integrated into Being as a part of it so that becoming is unreal. Consequently, Being's identity is a simple one which corresponds to the principle of identity

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

in thought. Then, the static character of thought determines the non-dynamic nature of Being through its three principles of thinking. The philosophical grounding of Being's eternal present revelation is rooted in such a kind of thinking.

Thirdly, the denial of history and the knowledge of history. Because history implies change in itself and change is not thinkable and everything unthinkable is not real, history is unthinkable and unreal. It cannot be grasped by thought. Therefore, there is no way for the knowledge of history. Reality must be viewed as the eternal present of Being rather than the ever changing of history. Moreover, change would imply that Being is imperfect and lacks something. It would not be the totality in itself so that it changes from one imperfect state to another imperfect one. However, being the eternal present, Being is the whole of all together.

Fourthly, the "eternal presence " of Being is not only a plain description of its timelessness but also a qualifying word which denotes the completeness, totality, Oneness, wholeness, altogetherness of Being itself. All predicates such as ungenerated, imperishable, immovable, indivisible point to its perfection from a negative perspective. Conversely, the changeable and historical world is not complete in itself. The only way of getting

rid of it is through contemplating the eternal present Being so as to grasp reality again.

Parmenides' concept of Being is a rational version of the primordial atemporal totality in epiphany religion. It offers a philosophical grounding for viewing reality as eternal presence, and at the same time universalizes the way of its disclosure and its being grasped in rational thinking. Parmenides is not concerned with the ontological status of the changeable world since, for him, it is an illusion.<sup>76</sup> The fundamental reason is that "the phenomenal world as such is not a different world from that of true Being; what appears as changing is only the result of a rearrangement that is hidden to the sense".<sup>77</sup> Then, change and eternity are but two sides of one coin. Nevertheless, his distinction of change and eternity anticipates Plato's doctrine of two worlds, namely, the unchangeable ideas and the phenomenal world, where the latter is not illusory but only less real compared with the former. But both Parmenides and Plato agree on the primacy of the former over the latter.

Moltmann observes that even where the modern age thinks in Kantian terms, Parmenides' concept of God as the epiphany of the eternal present of Being is at bottom

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<sup>76</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol.I, p.48.

<sup>77</sup> Taran, *Parmenides*, pp.187-188, n.31.

intended.<sup>78</sup> The merit of Parmenides' concept of Being is inherited once again in modern philosophy, especially as expressed in Kant's two levels of reality. In this way, contemporary Christian theology is influenced deeply by Parmenides' thought mainly through the influence of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

### 1.3.3 Barth's and Bultmann's Doctrine of Revelation

#### 1.3.3.1 Kant's Transcendental Philosophy

Before Barth's and Bultmann's present-orientated revelation is examined, it is worth understanding Kant's philosophy first.<sup>79</sup> This is because both Barth's and Bultmann's theologies are under the influence of Kant in several aspects.

As C. Sutton points out, Kant starts his philosophy by postulating two levels of reality.<sup>80</sup> These Kant calls "appearances" or "phenomena", contrasted with "things-in-

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<sup>78</sup> TH, p.40.

<sup>79</sup> For a brief introduction to Kant's philosophy and his influence on theology, see the following books. S.J. Grenz and R.E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992), pp.25-30; D. Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (London: SCM, 1985), pp.203-220; H. Thielicke, *Modern Faith and Thought*, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp.273-323.

<sup>80</sup> C. Sutton, *The German Tradition in Philosophy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p.22.

themselves" or "noumena".<sup>81</sup> Phenomena are objects present in the sensible intuition, that is, time and space, of a human knower while noumena are objects lying beyond that.<sup>82</sup> The realm of phenomena is governed by the natural law of cause and effect so as to be called the kingdom of nature which is a mechanical world. Conversely, the sphere of noumena is a kingdom of freedom beyond causality law in which humanity is autonomous. While humanity is in the sensuous world, he is subjected to the law of causality and does not appear to be free.<sup>83</sup> He is an empirical self. But, as a noumenal self in the noumenal world, he gets "beyond the mechanism of blindly working causes"<sup>84</sup> so as to be a free acting agent.

There are several aspects which are worth noting. Firstly, for Kant, God is a noumenon which is not present in the sensible intuition, that is, does not appear in time and space. Then, God is not an object of the phenomenal world to be known by the theoretical reason. All the traditional proofs of God's existence are the misuse of theoretical reason so as to be invalid. Therefore, Kant

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> For detail of Kant's definition of noumena, see C.D. Broad, *Kant: An Introduction*, ed. C. Lewy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.202. Cf. H.J. Paton, *The Category Imperative: A Study of Kant's Moral Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1946), p.269.

<sup>83</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L.W. Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), A 174, p.202.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, A 191.

sets a limit to the objectification function of the theoretical reason so that the realm of knowledge established by the theoretical reason is limited. In this way, the non-provability of God is due to his non-objectifiability by humanity's theoretical reason, not like the objectifiability of the natural world. God is free from any theoretical proof of humanity. However, it is reasonable to believe in God in the context of practical reason. In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says: "I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*."<sup>85</sup> For him, "faith" belongs to the practical reason aspect concerning human action and morality. For the sake of making sense of moral practice, God, then, is a reasonable postulation.

The second point is about the atemporal character of the realm of noumena. This realm is that of the non-objective and non-objectifiable, of which freedom is the central nature. The noumenal self in this realm is free from the categories of sensible intuition and understanding imposed by the theoretical reason. He is not to be subjected to the causality law that governs nature and history, but is wholly self-dependent and exclusively autonomous in his moral action. Human being is not bound to time any more. This realm is a kind of "primal history", so called by F.

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<sup>85</sup> I. Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith (London: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's, 1929), p.29.



Overbeck when he takes up this notion from Kant in understanding the true Christianity.<sup>86</sup> Here origin and eschatology are truly one.<sup>87</sup> Time, in Kantian sense, is absolutely not applicable in this realm. Therefore, this noumenal world discloses itself only in the action of practical reason which is operating beyond time. In Christian wording, it reveals itself in eternity or eternal present.

Thirdly, Kant in his treatise on *Der Ende aller Dinge* (*The End of All Things*) understands the *eschaton* in terms of his two levels of reality. On the one hand, Kant argues "against the *end of all things* as a [form of] temporal being and as an object of possible experience"<sup>88</sup> since these "objects ... lie entirely beyond the scope of our vision".<sup>89</sup> They "do not stand under conditions of time".<sup>90</sup> They are therefore not the objects of theoretical reason. On the other hand, "although these ideas transcend speculative cognition, they are not for that reason to be regarded as empty in every regard".<sup>91</sup> What Kant thinks is

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<sup>86</sup> C. van Til, *The New Modernism: An Appraisal of the Theology of Barth and Brunner* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), pp.85-89.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> I. Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. T. Humphrey (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), p.93.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.93.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

that the idea of an end of all things does not have its origin in reasoning about the *physical* world, but is occasioned only by reasoning about the moral course of things in the world.<sup>92</sup> In this way, Kant says: "We have to think of them with a view to moral principles concerned with the ultimate purpose of all things."<sup>93</sup> In other words, the *eschaton* is supra-sensible<sup>94</sup> so as to be beyond all possibility of knowledge but only to be acquired through practical reason. "The ideas of the last things have therefore to be ethically examined, and considered in the sphere of the moral reason, of the practical ability to be a self."<sup>95</sup>

In this way, it is not strange for Moltmann to cite Hans Urs von Balthasar's remark: "transcendental philosophy becomes the method towards inward apocalypse".<sup>96</sup> Moreover, because this inward apocalypse is placed in the realm of noumena, it does not get any futuristic sense but only immediate present without origin and end which happens in the world of Overbeck's "primal history".

#### 1.3.3.2 Barth and Bultmann

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.94.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.97.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp.93, 94.

<sup>95</sup> TH, p.47.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.48.

#### 1.3.3.2.1 Introduction

Being the pupils of W. Herrmann, both Barth's and Bultmann's concepts of God's revelation develop from their own interpretation of their teacher's statement in his book *Gottes Offenbarung an uns*: "We have no other means of knowing God except that he reveals himself to us ourselves by acting on us."<sup>97</sup> This statement consists of two parts concerning God's revelation. Negatively, as pointed out by Moltmann, "revelation of God cannot be objectively explained".<sup>98</sup> Positively, "it can certainly be experienced in man's own self, namely, in the non-objectivity of the dark, defenceless depths in which we live the moment of involvement".<sup>99</sup> It is on the non-objectifiability of God's revelation that they both agree without any dispute. However, they have different interpretations of the second part of the statement. "Does the statement mean that God himself must reveal himself to us, or that God must reveal himself to us ourselves? Does the 'self' of the self-revelation refer essentially to God or to man?"<sup>100</sup>

Despite their different interpretations of the meaning of "self-revelation", this "self" must not belong to the objective realm but to a transcendental one in which the

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<sup>97</sup> Cited from *TH*, p.52.

<sup>98</sup> *TH*, p.52.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

self is free and autonomous. It is in this place that Barth and Bultmann are inheriting Kant's idea of God's non-objectifiability.<sup>101</sup> For both Barth and Bultmann God is subject whose provability is not a matter of objectification through humanity's theoretical reason. He is beyond humanity's cognitive faculty. In Kantian wording, God is not to be known in the phenomenal world as an object. It follows that God's revelation cannot be objectified either. His revelation is not an event happening in the realm of phenomena or in an objectified world, but an event in that of noumena or in a subjective world. However, what matters to Barth and Bultmann is: does God reveal himself through his own transcendental self or humanity's transcendental self? In other words, Barth understands Herrmann's "self" as the transcendental subjectivity of God whereas Bultmann considers it as the transcendental subjectivity of humanity. No matter what the "self" refers to, it is a "transcendental" one in both of their theologies. In either case God's subjectivity is maintained since he does not reveal himself within the realm of phenomena but in the realm of noumena.

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<sup>101</sup> For the discussion of the influence of Kantian philosophy on Barth and Bultmann, see the following. S. Fisher, *Revelatory Positivism?: Barth's earliest Theology and the Marburg School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.170-211; G.S. Hendry, "The Transcendental Method in the Theology of Karl Barth", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37/2(1984), pp.213-227; R.A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing: Philosophy and Historiography in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp.38-86.

In the following, Barth's and Bultmann's doctrine of revelation will be analyzed to show that due to their placing God's revelation within the transcendental realm, what God reveals is his eternal present.

#### 1.3.3.2.2 Barth

Although there is a saying that Barth's theology can be viewed as early and mature, where the former is represented by his famous *The Epistle to the Romans* while the latter is represented by his magnum opus *Church Dogmatics*, Barth himself comments on this saying about the "change" or even "break" in his theological development that "he has remained basically faithfully to the step he took after the First World War".<sup>102</sup> In other words, Barth thinks that his whole theology is consistent since his publication of *The Epistle to the Romans*. However, in what sense are these two works consistent with one another? G.S. Hendry argues that in Barth's theological development there does not exist any change in his basic theological structure. He even says that "the changed pattern was, however, deceptive; for the underlying structure remained, largely, unchanged".<sup>103</sup> What Hendry means by the underlying structure which is prevailing in Barth's whole theology is Kant's

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<sup>102</sup> H. Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, trans. R.A. Wilson (London: William Collins Sons, 1969), p.87.

<sup>103</sup> Hendry, "The Transcendental Method in the Theology of Karl Barth", p.219.

transcendental philosophy.<sup>104</sup> Despite Hendry's argument of Kant's transcendent philosophy as the underlying philosophy which goes through Barth's early and mature theologies, one thing is true to Barth's whole theology: God is a non-objectifiable subject.

Owing to God's non-objectifiability and non-provability in Kant's transcendent philosophy, Barth further agrees with Kierkegaard's "infinite qualitative distinction" between time and eternity,<sup>105</sup> in which "God is in heaven and man on earth".<sup>106</sup> Kierkegaard's infinite qualitative distinction is taken up to support God's non-objectifiability in Barth's theology. Due to the absolute ontological distinction between creator and creature, God's subjectivity, then, cannot be dissolved by humanity's subjectivity either cognitively or ethically. It is at this point Barth makes a distance from Kant's placing God within humanity's practical reason. "God is not subject to man's passive scrutiny as *Objekt*, but stands over and against him as *Gegen-stand*."<sup>107</sup> Later, Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* expresses the same concern while discussing God's

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E.C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p.10.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> A.E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.105.

revelation: God as the Subject who is never Object.<sup>108</sup> For Barth, God is not only "Subject" but "indissolubly Subject".<sup>109</sup>

Corresponding to this indissoluble Subject is its primal or primordial history (*Ur-geschichte*), which is the transcendental condition of history (*Geschichte*).<sup>110</sup> This means that what happens in *Urgeschichte* determines what happens in the realm of the historical.<sup>111</sup> In the early Barth, revelation is posited in this sphere of *Urgeschichte*.<sup>112</sup> God's revelation is a "mathematical point" in which God touches this world only "as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it".<sup>113</sup> This conception

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<sup>108</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), p.381. On this, see J. Brown, *Subject and Object in Modern Theology* (London: SCM, 1955), pp.140-167.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp.381, 382.

<sup>110</sup> Hendry, "The Transcendental Method in the Theology of Karl Barth", p.28. Barth's concept "*Urgeschichte*" is picked up from Overbeck, who is believed to develop this from the Kantian idea of the noumenal self in understanding that true Christianity appears in the realm of primal history. See van Til, *The New Modernism*, pp.85-90; J.D. Smart, *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology: Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, 1908-1933* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), pp.101, 114.

<sup>111</sup> Smart, *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology*, p.114.

<sup>112</sup> C.E. Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), p.21.

<sup>113</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p.30.

of two tracks of history and their "touch by not touching"<sup>114</sup> relationship dominates Barth's theology, especially his understanding of God's revelation, since his dialectical period, for the sake of safeguarding God's non-objectifiable and indissoluble subjectivity.

As observed by Moltmann, through the interpretation of his teacher Herrmann's "self-revelation" in his article "The Principles of Dogmatics According to Wilhelm Herrmann" in 1925, Barth begins to develop his doctrine of the "self-revelation" of God in detail.<sup>115</sup> It is in this essay that Barth articulates God's self-revelation with the purpose of grounding God in himself. For Barth, "there is no word more significant for Herrmann's theology than the word 'self'".<sup>116</sup> God is like the lion breaking his cage; "a wholly different 'self' has stepped into the scene with *his* own validity".<sup>117</sup> All human being's religious experience can only be a pointer towards the ground that is really grounded in itself, that "is never in any sense 'object', but is always unchangeably subject".<sup>118</sup> In other words, God cannot be objectively grounded through humanity's

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<sup>114</sup> R.W. Jenson, "Karl Barth" in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. D.F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.32.

<sup>115</sup> *TH*, pp.51-52.

<sup>116</sup> K. Barth, *Theology and Church: Shorter Writings 1920-1928*, trans. L.P. Smith (London: SCM, 1962), p.254.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.260.



subjective action, but can only ground himself through his own grounding. Being "eternally subject and never object", God "determines himself and is knowable exclusively through himself in 'pure act' (*actus purissimus*) of his Triune Personality".<sup>119</sup> Then, God's revelation is not through anything other than himself, such as human being's religious experience, but through himself alone. God's revelation is his self-revelation through which God proves and grounds himself.

In the *Church Dogmatics* I/1 Barth develops his idea of self-revelation in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity. For him, "revelation is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the Trinity has no other basis apart from this".<sup>120</sup> Barth, then, starts his idea of revelation with the event of *Deus dixit* (God speaks) in which the subject, predicate and object of revelation are all within God himself.<sup>121</sup> Actually, God is himself the event of revelation because he is the subject (God reveals), the content (God reveals *himself*), and the very happening (God *reveals himself*).<sup>122</sup> In God's self-revelation, God is the agent, the content and the state of

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.256.

<sup>120</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.312.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.296.

<sup>122</sup> W.J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1982), pp.115-116.

revelation. "God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself."<sup>123</sup> God himself is Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness. He takes the initiative in the act of revelation and executes the revelation not through any medium less than himself, but through his *alter ego*.<sup>124</sup> In this way, Herrmann's idea of subjectivity recedes in favour of a detailed doctrine of the immanent Trinity in the Church Dogmatics I/1.<sup>125</sup> Since "revelation is the self-interpretation of this God",<sup>126</sup> the doctrine of the Trinity developed from the concept of revelation, then, is the interpretation of God's self-interpretation.<sup>127</sup>

Because it really is God who reveals himself, because God reveals himself, Barth can proceed to say:<sup>128</sup> "We may sum all this up in the statement that God reveals Himself as the Lord. This statement is to be regarded as an

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<sup>123</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.296.

<sup>124</sup> J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* (London: SCM, 1966), p.157.

<sup>125</sup> *TH*, p.56.

<sup>126</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.311.

<sup>127</sup> E. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's being is in Becoming*, trans. Scottish Academic Press (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p.17. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.312.

<sup>128</sup> C. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) p.129.

analytical judgement."<sup>129</sup> "Lordship is present in revelation because its reality and truth are so fully self-grounded, because it does not need any other actualization or validation than that of its actual occurrence, because it is revelation through itself and not in relation to something else, because it is that self-contained *novum*."<sup>130</sup> While Barth connects the self-revelation of God with the "lordship of God", he emphasizes God's transcendental exclusiveness once again. Revelation is testimony to the lordship of God<sup>131</sup> because God's self-revelation is his own proof by himself alone.

Accordingly, such a whole event of revelation is a self-enclosed circle but one which at the same time reaches out and embraces humanity.<sup>132</sup> On the one hand, God reveals himself in actual fact as "somebody" and "something" for humanity, not as pure, absolute Thou.<sup>133</sup> In his revelation God does not identify himself with something other than what he himself is.<sup>134</sup> "Thus in revealing "something" (his lordship) and "somebody" (namely, himself in his son), God

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<sup>129</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.306.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> J. Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p.37.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.42.

<sup>133</sup> TH, p.56.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

reveals himself."<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, Barth starts God's revelation with the pre-existent Christ, with the second person of the Trinity in the immanent Trinity. Then, firstly, "the history of Jesus Christ is recognized not merely as a 30-year episode in time and space, but as an event encompassing and embracing the entire history of God and man, beginning from eternity and stretching into eternity".<sup>136</sup> And secondly, in the person and work of Christ "God is merely declaring to man what he had consummated in eternity, by a decree which anticipates everything temporal."<sup>137</sup> In this way, revelation is an eternal recapitulation of what God already is. The history of Jesus Christ can therefore only recapitulate in time what has already happened antecedently in eternity.<sup>138</sup>

Of this Zahrnt says that "the divine Trinity devised a drama in eternity, and gave its first performance within itself, played by the three persons. Now this drama is to be re-enacted on earth, as it has been in heaven. To this end the world is created as the stage, and man as the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg*, p.108. Cf. Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, pp.94-95.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p.109. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, pp.53-54.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p.110

spectator".<sup>139</sup> Obviously, God's self-revelation, in the first sense, means God's eternal self-understanding within the triune God. It follows that "self-revelation of God" means the "pure presence of God", an "eternal presence of God in time", a "presence without any future".<sup>140</sup> In a word, it is an epiphany of the eternal presence.

#### 1.3.3.2.2 Bultmann

It is helpful to understand Bultmann's concept of God's revelation starting with Moltmann's sharp observation.<sup>141</sup> Bultmann in his 1924 essay "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement" says: "The subject of theology is God, and the chief charge to be brought against liberal theology is that it has dealt not with God but with man. God represents the radical negation and sublimation of man."<sup>142</sup> However, This essay ends with the programmatic statement: "The subject of theology is God. Theology speaks of God because it speaks of man as he stands before God. That is, theology speaks of faith."<sup>143</sup> Two points are worth noting here. In the first place, Bultmann, like Barth, does

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<sup>139</sup> Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, p.113.

<sup>140</sup> TH, pp.55, 57.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>142</sup> R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, trans. L.P. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p.29.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p.52.

not see God as a given entity<sup>144</sup> that can be known directly through objectification either mythical or scientific. God, for him, is the "Wholly Other"<sup>145</sup> as one who is known only when he reveals himself.<sup>146</sup> "His revelation comes only contingently; it is act, act directed toward *man*."<sup>147</sup> In the second place, God as the Wholly Other does not mean that "God is something wholly different from man, a metaphysical being, a kind of an immaterial world",<sup>148</sup> since such a sort of metaphysical object is something constructed by human mind. God would remain an object and his transcendence, just as in myth, would be reduced to immanence.<sup>149</sup> As pointed out by R.A. Johnson, "Wholly Other" is strictly a relational category which says more about the human condition than it does about God.<sup>150</sup> For Bultmann, there is an unobservable, hidden correlation of God and the "self" of humanity. "God and the 'self' of man stand in unsevered relation to each other."<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp.33, 45.

<sup>145</sup> R. Bultmann, "What does it Mean to Speak of God?" in *Faith and Understanding*, trans.L.P. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp.53-65.

<sup>146</sup> Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, p.45.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>149</sup> R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* vol.I, ed. H.-W. Bartsch, trans. R.H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1972), p.44.

<sup>150</sup> R.A. Johnson, Introduction to *Rudolf Bultmann: Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era*, ed. R.A. Johnson (London: Collins, 1987), p.19.

<sup>151</sup> *TH*, p.60.

Then, how does humanity's existence correlate with God? For Bultmann, "in human existence an *existentiell* knowledge about God is alive in the form of the inquiry about 'happiness', 'salvation', the meaning of the world and of history; and in the inquiry into the real nature of each person's particular 'being'".<sup>152</sup> While human being is asking the questions raised by one's existence, he is seeking God or an answer only God can provide. Being the structure of human existence, this questionableness points to the pre-understanding of humanity in which humanity understands implicitly that his existence is not separated from God. Therefore, Bultmann links humanity's existential inquiry to Augustine's famous statement that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.<sup>153</sup> "And we cannot talk about our existence since we cannot talk about God. We could do the one only along with the other ... Therefore the truth holds that when the question is raised of how any speaking of God can be possible, the answer must be, it is only possible as talk of ourselves."<sup>154</sup> Owing to humanity's existential structure, the only way of speaking of God is speaking of humanity's own existence.

In this way, Bultmann places God and the self of humanity in the same realm in which the characteristic of

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<sup>152</sup> R. Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. J.C.G. Greig (London: SCM, 1955), p.257.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, pp.60-61.

non-objectifiability belongs to both. In humanity's authentic encounter with God, both his own self and God are subjects, and God's revelation would not be objectified in such an inter-subjective realm. It follows that God's revelation can only be spoken of in this encounter event. God, then, only discloses himself to humanity's transcendental subjectivity. Consequently, Bultmann's proof of God, according to Moltmann, is "an advanced, deepened and reshaped form of the only proof of God left over by Kant -- the moral proof of God supplied by the practical reason".<sup>155</sup> God "proves himself to the believing 'self'".<sup>156</sup>

It follows that, in the view of Bultmann, through this encounter one does not know a *historisch* (historical) event, but *geschichtlich* (historic) event. God's saving act in Christ does not happen as *Historie* but as *Geschichte*.<sup>157</sup> An event is *historisch* in so far as it lies wholly within the past which is known through the objective methods of historical research. An event is *geschichtlich* in so far as it both lies in the past and has existential significance for the present which is known through a personal

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<sup>155</sup> TH, p.61.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> It is M. Kahler who first makes the distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* that Bultmann uses.



encounter.<sup>158</sup> What one encounters, then, is not the historical facts but the meaning or significance of those facts for humanity's existence. H.P. Owen further points out these two views of history's relationship to time. "An 'historical' is wholly temporal ... An 'historic' event ... is not wholly temporal; it is both temporal and eternal; it is the point at which eternity crosses time."<sup>159</sup> In other words, humanity is facing God's eternal presence in this encounter. "Each encounter is a moment at which eternity crosses time; it is an eschatological event in so far as it brings time to an end."<sup>160</sup> Then, how does this encounter between God and humanity happen?

For Bultmann, this encounter happens when the Christ event is preached. Humanity encounters God in the kerygma. And in the kerygma, Christ is present. "The content of the Kerygma is the event of Christ, and it is this event of Christ which takes place here and now in preaching."<sup>161</sup> Bultmann considers that the whole event of revelation is concentrated upon the kerygma.<sup>162</sup> In other words, God's revelation is proceeding through the present of the event

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<sup>158</sup> H.P. Owen, *Revelation and Existence: A Study in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), p.25.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., pp.25-26.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>161</sup> Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, p.235.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

of Christ in the kerygma. In this kerygma, God's act in Christ reveals to humanity the eschatological event and calls humanity to make a decision about his own existence.

What is this eschatological event? By "eschatology" Bultmann does not mean the catastrophic destruction of the world at the end of time, but the end of the world which in faith is an event taking place even now.<sup>163</sup> Eschatological event is not an event that denotes the end of this physical world in time. It is God's act in Christ and in the kerygma by which God has set an end to the old world in the sense of inauthentic existence. Humanity is challenged to make his own decision to be authentic or inauthentic while God in the Christ event discloses that he has made authentic existence possible. He comes to understand his old self and the possibility of coming to be a new one only in God's revelation. *Parousia* is not some future event but happens in the existential kerygma and makes the latter the eschatological event. Humanity is addressed by the kerygma here and now. "This 'Now' of being addressed at a specified moment, this moment, is *the eschatological 'Now'*, because in it the decision is made between life and death ... Therefore it is not true that the *parousia*, expected by others as an event occurring in time, is now denied or transformed by John into a process within the soul, an experience. Rather, John opens the reader's eyes: the

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.230.

*parousia* has already occurred."<sup>164</sup> "Eschatology is wholly 'realized' and wholly individualized."<sup>165</sup>

God, then, can be spoken of only when humanity's existence is spoken of, because God encounters humanity in his existence. Only in this encounter, God reveals himself while humanity's authenticity is disclosed in the kerygma of God's act in the Christ event. However, such a revelation of God is an eschatological event which happens as *Geschichte*. It is an eternal "now" happening in which God's revelation completes and humanity attains his authentic existence. In this way, "God's 'futurity' would be 'constant' and man's openness in his 'wayfaring' would likewise be 'constant' and 'never-ending'".<sup>166</sup> That is, both God and humanity would not have any future that is better than this eschatological moment. Bultmann's doctrine of revelation, as mentioned above, is another form of the "epiphany of the eternal present".

#### 1.3.4 Pannenberg's Doctrine of Revelation

Pannenberg's doctrine of revelation starts with his understanding of revelation as self-revelation of God

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<sup>164</sup> Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, p.175.

<sup>165</sup> Owen, *Revelation and Existence: A Study in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, p.45.

<sup>166</sup> *TH*, p.68.

but indirect. On the one hand, he agrees with Barth to take the notion of revelation from Hegel<sup>167</sup> that revelation is not the disclosure of truths about God but "in essence, the self-revelation of God".<sup>168</sup> If revelation is self-revelation, there can only be a single and unique revelation.<sup>169</sup> If revelation is self-revelation, "the revealer and the content of the revelation are identical".<sup>170</sup> If revelation is self-revelation, "it constitutes genuine, though not necessarily exhaustive, knowledge of God".<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, Pannenberg differs from Barth that according to his analysis of the biblical materials God does not reveal himself directly, but indirectly through his act in history.<sup>172</sup> "Every activity and act of God can indirectly express something about God."<sup>173</sup> Although an event initially discloses simply itself, it subsequently demands perceiving it as an act of

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<sup>167</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Introduction to Revelation as History*, ed. W. Pannenberg, trans. D. Granskow (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969), pp.4-5.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>169</sup> E.F. Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), p.82.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>171</sup> C. Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* vol.1, ed. D.F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.259. Cf. Tupper, *The theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, p.85.

<sup>172</sup> Pannenberg, *Introduction to Revelation as History*, pp.8-13. On the discussion of direct and indirect communication, see pp.13-19.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p.15.

God from a different perspective. Pannenberg reasons: "As acts of God, these acts cast light back on God himself, communicating something indirectly about God himself".<sup>174</sup>

However, every individual event can "illuminate the being of God only in a partial way".<sup>175</sup> It breaks up the self-revelation of God into individual pieces none of which would provide a full disclosure of God. Hence, revelation must be understood as "the totality of God's action".<sup>176</sup> "The totality of his speech and activity, the history brought about by God, shows who he is in an indirect way."<sup>177</sup> Then, "revelation in the sense of the full self-revelation of God in his glory can be possible only where the whole of history is understood as revelation."<sup>178</sup>

Pannenberg admits there are two possibilities of understanding the totality of reality: either in the Greek way of unalterable cosmos or in the German idealism of temporal development.<sup>179</sup> Although Pannenberg's position is the latter, Moltmann says that it intends to extend and supersede the Greek cosmic theology with the same

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p.16

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>178</sup> TH, p.77.

<sup>179</sup> Pannenberg, *Introduction to Revelation as History*, p.16.

epistemological method: retroflexive argument.<sup>180</sup> "The place of the cosmological proof of God, which argued from 'reality as cosmos' to the one divine *arche* and so provided proof of a cosmological monotheism, is taken by a theology of history which argues back in the same way from the unity of 'reality as history' to the one God of history."<sup>181</sup> "Just as in Greek cosmic theology the eternal being of God is indirectly manifest in that which is, and can be inferred from it, so here God's being would be recognized in the has-beens of history."<sup>182</sup> They both take the totality as their starting point of proof of God but with different denotation, one refers to cosmos whereas the other refer to history. Their arguments are the same.

To be sure, understanding God's self-revelation by the category "history" instead of "cosmos" would make the reality "open-ended towards the future"<sup>183</sup> because totality as history can only be attained at the end of history. It follows that "all knowledge of God and the world has an eschatologically qualified 'provisional' character".<sup>184</sup> However, this future orientated history does get its meaning only under the condition of seeing reality in its totality. The significance of the future is due to the not

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<sup>180</sup> TH, pp.77-78.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

yet coming of the reality as a whole. With this, God's "epiphany will be represented by the totality of reality in its completed form".<sup>185</sup> The totality of reality as history, then, like a mirror reflects God's being completely.

With the understanding that the totality of history constitutes God's self-revelation, how can one interpret the historical particularity of Jesus of Nazareth as God's final revelation?<sup>186</sup> Pannenberg says that "in the fate of Jesus, the end of history is experienced in advance as an anticipation".<sup>187</sup> "Jesus is the anticipated end and not the middle of history."<sup>188</sup> As the pre-actualization of the end of history, Jesus of Nazareth discloses God's power over everything in his own resurrection. Since the prophetic-apocalyptic tradition links God's glory at the end with the general resurrection of the dead, "the appearance and the fate of Jesus is thus decisively defined by means of the prophetic-apocalyptic expectation of the end".<sup>189</sup> Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is not only his own

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p.79.

<sup>186</sup> Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, p.92.

<sup>187</sup> W. Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation" in *Revelation as History*, ed. W. Pannenberg, ed. D. Granskow (London: sheed and Ward, 1969), p.134.

<sup>188</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays* vol.I, trans. G.H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p.24.

<sup>189</sup> Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Concept of Revelation", in *Revelation as History*, p.146.

but also the prolepsis of the end-time resurrection of the dead.

At this point, Moltmann criticizes: "If it were solely the risen 'destiny' of Jesus that constituted the forestalling of the end of all history and the anticipation of the 'destiny' still awaiting all men, then the risen Jesus himself would have no further future. Nor would it be for Jesus himself that those who known him would wait, but only for the repetition of his destiny in themselves. The church would be waiting for that which has already happened to Jesus to be repeated for itself, but not for the future of the risen Lord".<sup>190</sup> In other words, the end of all history would only be the repetition and confirmation of God's final revelation in the resurrection of Jesus. It follows that the revelation of God in the destiny of Jesus is but the pre-actualization of his eternal present.

While taking totality as his primary category of the self-revelation of God which requires that only at the end of history there is a full revelation of God, Pannenberg at the same time understands that God discloses the end of history in the resurrection of Jesus. This leaves his doctrine of revelation no better than the epiphany of the eternal present. The crucial problem is that he sees revelation as history but does not ask the question of how

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<sup>190</sup> TH, p.82. For the comment on Moltmann's criticisms of Pannenberg as illegitimate, see Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, pp.259-260.



history is possible. History is only a mirror reflecting God's being indirectly. Then, Jesus' resurrection, as a historical occurrence and a prolepsis of the end of history, reflects God's final act in history. If God's act at the end of history is the epiphany of his eternal present, then the resurrection of Jesus would be the pre-actualization of the epiphany of God's eternal present. It reflects God's whole glory in advance.

#### 1.4 Conclusion: The Characteristic of Revealing in the Way of Epiphany of the Eternal Present

In this part the common characteristics of the concept of revelation in the ideas mentioned above will be pointed out. They are all the conditions that lead God's revelation to be the epiphany of the eternal present. And it is to be acknowledged that Pannenberg's doctrine of revelation, indeed, should not be counted in the same pattern of the epiphanic revelation. However, according to Moltmann, his turn away from the epiphany of the eternal present is not radical enough. This will be analyzed in this section also .

##### 1.4.1 Two Levels of Reality and Dual Tracks of Time

In the first place, all of them, except Pannenberg, take a view of two levels or modes of reality or world and

correspondingly dual tracks of time or history. In the Canaanite religion, they are the original beginning with the sacred or mythical time and the changing world with the profane time. In Parmenides' thought, Being is contrasted with becoming which is illusion. The former is eternal while the latter is in time. Kant divides reality as the realm of noumena and that of phenomena according to the twofold functions of humanity's reason: theoretical and practical. The world of phenomena is under the control of the law of causality in time, but that of noumena is not conditioned by time so as to be free from any restriction. In the Christian theology, Barth's eternity and time, or *Geschichte* which is conditioned by *Urgeschichte* and *Historie*, are the contrast between the history of God and history of the world respectively. Bultmann's *Geschichte* and *Historie* belong to two different modes of existence, namely, authentic and inauthentic; or two different modes of world: objective and inter-subjective. Barth takes "refuge from *Historie* in the diffuse realms of pre- or supra-history; Bultmann ... in the inwardness of existential historicity".<sup>191</sup>

These two worlds and histories do not enjoy the same ontological status. The real reality is the eternal, changeless world rather than the transient, changeable. The real reality cannot be known or approached through the less

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<sup>191</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg*, pp.164-165.

real reality. Therefore, they do not merely posit God but also locate his revelation in this realm so as to avoid God's revelation of himself being distorted by the changeable world. Hence, God's revelation does not happen in the sphere of profane time but sacred or mythical time, not sense experience but abstract thinking, not phenomena but noumena, not *Historie* but *Geschichte*. In a word, they ultimately retreat to a sphere that is free from any distortion of God's eternal being. It follows that God's revelation is a process or an event of disclosing something that is perfect and actualized but not something that is not yet arrived. God in this sphere is perfect and complete, lacks nothing to be finished in the future. Then, what he reveals is his actualization in eternity and his revelation is a kind of the epiphany of the eternal present.

If God's revelation happens in the sphere of eternity, then the problem for humanity in time would be: how can they approach this sphere so as to know God's revelation? Then, what follows is the problem that how God's revelation can be received by humanity.

#### 1.4.2 Revelation in Analogical Way

In the Canaanite religion the very beginning is present when a certain pattern of rite is practised. Because this rite shares the same structure with the cosmogony, every

time this significant action is repeated, the archetypal action of God, which takes place in a mythical time, is being repeated. In this kind of religion God reveals his eternal present in an analogical way through humanity's practising a pattern of religious rite which corresponds to God's action in the very beginning. Instead of revealing through religious rite, Parmenides's Being can only be known through humanity's reason or thinking. Being and thinking are the same thing. Being's eternal character is reflected in the principles of thinking which determine the former.

Barth's doctrine of revelation, first of all, is God's self-revelation through himself, and then a reflection of this internal action in the history of Jesus Christ in the world. God's revelation, from the very beginning, is in an analogical way in a strict sense. This means that God is revealed through God only. In the case of Bultmann, God reveals himself through humanity's authenticity. He admits that there is an analogy between the activity of God and that of humanity and between the fellowship of God and humanity and that of humanity with humanity.<sup>192</sup> Then, the difference between Barth and Bultmann is not something about the epistemological principle according to which God is known or revealed, but is something about through what, God or humanity, God is known or revealed. They both follow

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<sup>192</sup> R. Bultmann, "Bultmann Replies to his Critics", in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* vol.I, ed.H.-W. Bartsch, trans. R.H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1972), p.197.

the analogical way of revelation but with different application.

To put it in a sum, this kind of religion, philosophy and theology all takes analogical way as the way of God's revelation. However, the point most worth noting is the relationship with the two levels of reality, the dual tracks of history and revelation as the epiphany of the eternal present.

In the theory of two levels of reality or two kinds of world, God is posited in the eternity which is perfect and fully actualized ontologically. And every act of God, including the activity of God revealing himself, is bound to this eternal realm. The only way for God to reveal himself, then, is through something that belongs to eternity, or is in time but not of time so that his revelation would not be distorted by the transient world but can be known by it. Obviously, the analogical way of revelation is the best way to be used under these conditions. Through it God is reflected as such without any distortion. However, it is precisely for this reason, God's revelation is the revelation of his eternal present. Therefore, it is understandable that such a kind of revelation does not initiate any history of the world, and also there is not any history of God.

#### 1.4.3 The Non-Radical Turn of Pannenberg's Doctrine of Revelation

Surely, Pannenberg gets rid of the dual tracks of history by seeing revelation as history. However, his emphasis on the primacy of the category "totality" makes him neglect the crucial problem that how history is possible, as Moltmann charges him with this: "it itself fails to undertake critical reflection on the conditions of the possibility of perceiving reality as history in the eschatological and theological sense."<sup>193</sup> This is because Pannenberg, epistemologically, adopts Greek's retroflexive argument, according to Moltmann, which "presupposes an unbroken link between God and history, on the ground of which we can argue back from it to him".<sup>194</sup> "Since this is also the basis of the cosmological proof of God, 'history' is here understood as indirect theophany, just as the cosmos then was in Greek cosmology."<sup>195</sup>

In this way, if history is taken as revelation of God, it should be understood primary by its whole rather than its process. It is only against the background of taking history as a whole that history as process gets its meaning. But this can happen only when history comes to the end. History as totality, like a finished product, reflects

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<sup>193</sup> TH, p.79.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., pp.77-78, n.7.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

indirectly God's eternal being at this moment. Pannenberg is right in limiting his application of analogy in the sphere of eternity. And by understanding of the resurrection of Jesus as the prolepsis of the end of the universal history, Pannenberg takes it as the pre-actualization of God's power of unity over all. In other words, God's being is disclosed in advance in the resurrection of Jesus as the one who unites all the things and God's future, thus, is anticipated as the universal manifestation of his power. It seems that analogical principle is applied at this point once again. Nevertheless, he does not further explain how history is initiated so as to be the meaningful reality. That is, under what conditions history is possible to be perceived as reality.

On this, Moltmann comments: "But to think both of the God of the resurrection and the reality of the world is not possible in the direct way attempted in the cosmological proof of God, for this would presuppose an ordered world and a divine plan of history which is identical with the course of history. In the face of the reality of suffering and the God-forsaken state of this world and history, both are illusionary."<sup>196</sup> Apparently, the underlying reason for Moltmann criticizing Pannenberg of lacking critical reflection on the conditions of the possibility of

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<sup>196</sup> HP, p.25.

perceiving reality as history is that Pannenberg does not take the God-forsaken state of this world and history into account in his doctrine of revelation. This comment gets its response from J. Sobrino, a liberation theologian. He writes:

... Pannenberg does not seem to realize that the negative side of history cannot be comprehended readily in the horizon of a universal history because it is in fact the negative aspect which seems to rule out any possibility of giving some total meaning to history. ... History cannot be comprehended as a whole so long as suffering, misery, and injustice exist.<sup>197</sup>

Therefore, for Moltmann, Pannenberg's doctrine of revelation belongs to the same kind of Barth's and Bultmann's, because they "all presuppose that the validation of what is Christian must be found in the fact that word and reality, word and existence, word and name are congruent, and the truth is experienced in correspondence, confirmity and agreement".<sup>198</sup> What Moltmann rejects is the immediate correspondence of God's self-revelation which happens not only in the revelation as the epiphany of the eternal present, but also the revelation as history.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American View*, trans. J Drury (London: SCM, 1978), p.251.

<sup>198</sup> *HP*, P.15.

<sup>199</sup> R.D. Johns considers that "the key difference between Pannenberg's position and that of Moltmann ... centers on the concept of history". *Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz* (Montana: Scholars, 1976), p.104.



## 2 Revealing in the Promise

### 2.1 Different Views on *What* and *How*

#### 2.1.1 Ontological *What* Over Epistemological *How*

In the previous chapter two conditions which determine God's revelation by way of epiphany of the eternal presence are drawn out. These two conditions, namely, two kinds of world and analogical principle, however, belong to two different aspects, ontological and epistemological respectively. Furthermore, it is the former that determines the latter but not vice versa.

In this thought of two kinds of world, God and his action are of eternity, in contrast to the transient world. Whatever belongs to this divine world is perfect and actualized so that any improvement and development does not happen. This is very simple. Improvement or development means the change of something from one state to another state. "Improvement" implies that such a thing is not perfect enough at present so that it is going to change itself from imperfect to perfect in the future. "Development" means that it does not reach its own actuality yet so that it is going to actualize its potential fully. Owing to their implication of imperfect

and non-actualized, improvement and development are excluded from the eternal world.

In a word, being perfect and actualized are the two characteristics of the eternal world, which can be further classified as the states of ontological whatness. Two epistemological consequences follow. Firstly, it is due to these ontological characteristics that no process is allowed to appear in its epistemological how, that is, the way of revelation. God's self-revelation is not to be given by way of process in any sense, but in a point of eternal present. In other words, God reveals his eternal presence by way of epiphany of the eternal present so that his revelation is not involved in any temporal transience. It is his eternal presence that confines his way of revelation to that of eternal present. Therefore, God's self-revelation is ahistorical.

Secondly, this revelation in the way of epiphany of the eternal present is possible only when it takes the analogical principle as its epistemological condition. The essential function of the analogical principle is reflection. This means that by the analogical principle God's self-revelation is like the image reflected in the mirror immediately. Surely, the thing which plays the role of mirror must be something that can reach its eternal state, by nature such as Jesus Christ in Barth's theology or under certain conditions such as authentic, not

inauthentic, humanhood in Bultmann's theology, so as to be able to reflect God himself without any distortion. Obviously, while this analogical principle is taken as the condition of epistemological how, God's self-revelation will not affect the ontological what in any sense. God's self-revelation in this way just plays a role of reflecting his own being rather than having a retroactive effect on himself. This is because, ontologically, God is perfect and actualized already.

This kind of thought gives the ontological what priority over the epistemological how. And what follows is that the former determines the latter but not the reverse. It does not take the epistemological how into account seriously enough when studying God's self-revelation. Consequently, ahistoricity characterizes God's self-revelation. On the contrary, Moltmann starts his doctrine of revelation with the concrete "how" rather than the formal definition of revelation which allows the ontological what to determine the epistemological how, such as in the cases of Barth and Bultmann. For Bultmann: "In general, we understand by revelation the disclosure of what is veiled, the opening up of what is hidden."<sup>1</sup> For Barth: "Revelation in the Christian sense means the unveiling of certain facts that are fundamentally hidden from man, things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart

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<sup>1</sup> R. Bultmann, *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. S.M. Ogden (London: Collins, 1964), pp.67-68.

conceived."<sup>2</sup> These general and formal definitions of revelation do not give any clear and concrete account of how God reveals himself. However, both Bultmann and Barth, do not proceed further along the same line but shift to the ontological level of whatness. The doctrine of revelation, then, is subordinate to the doctrine of humanity and the doctrine of God respectively in favour of the proofs of God.<sup>3</sup> The epistemological how is subject to the ontological what. Consequently, one may suspect: "Does not the view of revelation in actuality distort the particular, historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ?"<sup>4</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Moltmann's Starting Point: God's Promise

From the very beginning, Moltmann considers that "revelation" cannot be understood apart from "the way of revelation". Rather, the specific way of revelation is essential to and constitutive of the concept of revelation. Moltmann writes: "Revelation is understood from the standpoint of the promise contained in the revelation."<sup>5</sup> For him, "the expression for 'revelation' in the biblical scriptures have completely broken out of their original

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<sup>2</sup> K. Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings 1946-52*, trans. M.E. Delacour and S. Godman (London: SCM, 1954), p.207.

<sup>3</sup> TH, p.43.

<sup>4</sup> M.D. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p.60.

<sup>5</sup> TH, p.100.

religious context and are employed with a meaning of a different kind."<sup>6</sup> "This different kind of meaning is mainly determined by the events of promise."<sup>7</sup> That is, "the concept of revelation has to be derived from the event of promise."<sup>8</sup> This means that God's way of self-revelation gets primacy, not his eternal being, when speaking of God's self-revelation. Then, humanity's knowledge about God is determined, at least, not only ontologically by God's eternal being, but also epistemologically by his way of revealing himself. This is because "revelation" is not formal without a concrete way. Conversely, the particular way of God's self-revelation would help to determine and shape what is revealed and even God's own being.

Therefore, Moltmann plainly advocates in the *Theology of Hope* the following famous statement: "God reveals himself in the form of promise and in the history that is marked by promise."<sup>9</sup> Through a comprehensive study of scripture, Moltmann discovers that "both Israel and the early church regarded the primary form of God's presence and appearance among them as promise for the future".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, p.72.

<sup>9</sup> TH, p.42.

<sup>10</sup> S.J. Grenz and R.E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p.177.

## 2.2 Revelation as Promise

### 2.2.1 Moltmann's Concept of God's Promise

When a promise is given, its truth is proved only when it is fulfilled afterward. In other words, a promise requires its own fulfillment in order to prove itself. Likewise, when God reveals himself in the way of promise, the first question to be asked is about its fulfillment. However, for Moltmann, the fulfillment of God's promise is not immediate. According to the content of God's promise, it "requires a future in order to prove itself".<sup>11</sup> In this vein, it is necessary to know Moltmann's understanding of God's promise firstly.

Moltmann in his *Theology of Hope* gives a clear explanation of what he understands by "promise" and more specifically by the "promise of (the guide-)God" in seven points.<sup>12</sup> He derives these descriptions mainly from W. Zimmerli's essay, "Promise and Fulfillment".<sup>13</sup> They can be summarized as follows.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> C. Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p.39.

<sup>12</sup> *TH*, pp.102-106.

<sup>13</sup> W. Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment" in *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. C. Westermann, trans. J.L. Mays (London: SCM, 1963), pp.89-122.

<sup>14</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott), pp.29-30.

(a) A promise announces the coming of a reality that does not yet exist. In the case of the divine promise, this future reality need not be a conceivable development from the possibilities of the present, but is what is possible for God.

(b) The promise initiates a history which leads to its fulfillment, and by arousing people's hopes for this fulfillment it involves people in its history and thus gives them a sense for history.

(c) The history initiated by the promise has a definite direction towards the promised fulfillment. Thus the promise creates a sense of past and future, dividing reality "into one reality which is passing and can be left behind, and another which must be expected and sought".<sup>15</sup>

(d) Because it announces a future reality, the promise stands in contrast to the reality which is open to present experience and seeks a different reality which will correspond to it.

(e) Between the giving of the promise and its fulfillment is an interval in which people may live in hope and obedience or in resignation and disobedience. This distinguishes the promise from fatalistic predictions.

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<sup>15</sup> TH, p.103.

(f) Since it is God who gives the promise, it is God in his freedom and faithfulness who is trusted to fulfil them. This means that fulfillment is not a matter of implementing a prediction to the letter, but can contain elements of surprise and novelty.

(g) The promises to Israel were not left behind in Israel's history through fulfillment or disappointment, but were constantly reinterpreted in a wider sense. In an "expanding history of promise" each fulfillment left an overplus of promise pointing to further fulfillment, since a reality wholly corresponding to the God who gave the promise was never reached.

#### 2.2.2 The Character of God's Promise (I): Future-Oriented and Contradictorily Structured

It should be noted that all the points with which Moltmann explicates the concept of promise are inseparable from the "future of this world". Indeed, the content of God's promise is nothing other than "the future of this world". The first character of God's promise, then, is future-oriented.

The promise points always from the appearances in which it is uttered, into the as yet unrealized future which it announces.<sup>16</sup> For Moltmann God's appearance is not to be

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.100.



considered in terms of the hallowing of places and times, but is immediately linked up with the uttering of a word of divine promise.<sup>17</sup> What should be paid attention to in God's self-revelation, then, is not his "sensually perceptible appearance", but his "announcement of his action"<sup>18</sup> in the first place.

God's announcement is about the not yet arrived reality. What the promise is primarily concerned with, then, is not God's eternal present, not like the doctrines of revelation in Barth and Bultmann. The promise does not announce anything about God simply in himself, but the future of this world. In other words, what is disclosed in God's revelation as promise is firstly the future reality of this world, rather than the eternal being of God himself.

It is this future that makes Moltmann's concept of promise different from others' ahistorical promise. There are two cases in which a promise does not involve any historical process in its realization. The first one is that it can be fulfilled immediately when it is given. The second one is that it does not realize itself in this transient world but in an eternal realm. However, if God's promise is about the future of this world, then its fulfillment cannot be abstracted from the historical

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., n.2.

process by either immediate realization or eternal actualization.

The second character of God's promise is its contradictory structure. In Moltmann's view, this promised future reality and the present reality do not merely differ from one another, but even contrast to each other. Moltmann expresses this very clearly in point (d): The promise "stands in contradiction to the reality open to experience now and heretofore".<sup>19</sup> The statement of promise "must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced".<sup>20</sup> In this way, a contradictory relationship is set up between the future and the present of this world. The promise is dialectic structured.

As pointed out by Bauckham, although Moltmann's concept of promise is indebted much to Zimmerli's essay it is notable that point (d) is not explicit in Zimmerli<sup>21</sup>. It is this explicit understanding of the contradiction that makes him as "a thoroughly dialectical thinker",<sup>22</sup> not in the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>21</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.30.

<sup>22</sup> H.W. Frei, "Book Review of *The Theology of Hope*", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 23/3 (1968), p.268.

Kierkegaardian or the early Barthian sense but in the Hegelian and Marxian sense.<sup>23</sup>

Moltmann writes: "Hope's statements of promise ... must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced ... They do not seek to illuminate the reality which exists, but the reality which is coming. They do not seek to make a mental picture of existing reality, but to lead existing reality towards the promised and hope-for transformation ... In so doing they give reality a historic character."<sup>24</sup> Moltmann draws a difference between the statements of promise and those statements "which describe existing reality and whose truth is therefore tested by their correspondence to existing reality".<sup>25</sup>

The latter does not require a transformation of the present, but conversely confirms and even justifies the *status quo*. This kind of revelation does not initiate any historical movement. However, the "promise, in contradicting this present reality, discloses not an eternal present, but a different future for this reality,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. For a brilliant comparison of Hegel's dialectic with Kierkegaard's, see M.C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp.141-180. For a general sketch of modern dialectic, see J. Ellul, *What I Believe*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: Marshall and Scott, 1989), pp.30-35.

<sup>24</sup> TH, p.18

<sup>25</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.30.

whose changeableness thereby becomes not meaningless transience, but movement in a meaningful direction".<sup>26</sup>

### 2.2.3 The Initiation of the History of this World

God's promise creates the history of this world through its two characters: future-oriented and contradictorily structured. How is this possible? Firstly, God's promise for the world divides one reality into the future and the present. The promise "has not yet found a reality congruous with it".<sup>27</sup> This not yet existed reality implies that the present reality of this world is not the same as the announced future. This promised future, then, has a function of uncovering the present reality in a contrasting way. Owing to this, a difference is set up between the future reality and the present reality. It is this difference that makes the movement from the present towards the future possible.

Secondly, God's promise provides a goal and direction for the world to attain. The announced future serves as a definite direction for the movement from the present towards the future. Such a movement, owing to its "definite trend towards the promised and outstanding fulfillment",<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> TH, p.103.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

"does not consist in cyclic recurrence".<sup>29</sup> The future is not a repetition of the origin. It does not return to its starting point, but moves towards a reality which is different from the present and the past.

However, is the difference between the future and the present a sufficient reason for the initiation of history? This means that if the future is only different from the present, why must one leave the present for the future and not stick to the present? Obviously, the difference itself cannot serve as the criterion of judging which is better. The fact that the future reality is different from the present does not justify that the former should be pursued or attained. The difference between the future and the present alone does not have the cogency making the present reality left behind.

At this point one will understand why point (d) is so crucial in Moltmann's understanding of the concept of promise. If the history of this world moving from the present to the future cannot be justified, then God's revelation as promise will lose its historic character. Moltmann will fail to reject the doctrine of revelation in the way of the epiphany of the eternal present.

The concept of contradiction implies difference but not vice versa. A contradictory relationship is a mutually

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

exclusive one, whereas a relationship of difference is not necessarily such. Either-or is the structure of contradiction but this is not the case with difference. In this way, a negation happens within this contradictory relationship.

Therefore, thirdly, it is only when the future and the present are posited, according to their natures, on the opposite poles, that the former can negate the latter through a historical movement. In this way, the future gains its primacy over the present because the latter is going to be negated and abolished. And in turn, a historical moving from the present towards the future is justified. It is this negation inherent in the contradiction that originates and drives the history moving towards the future and leaving behind the present. In other words, the promised future which contradicts the present is the crucial force that initiates the history of this world moving in a dialectical way.

In sum, history is initiated when "the word of promise cuts into events and divides one reality into reality which is passing and can be left behind, and another which must be expected and sought".<sup>30</sup> In this way, the historicity of this world is justified. The changeableness of the world is not absurd but with particular and meaningful direction.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.103.

#### 2.2.4 The Significances for God's Self-Revelation

When God reveals himself in the way of promise, there are several significant points which differs this kind of God's self-revelation from that in the way of the epiphany of the eternal presence.

##### 2.2.4.1 The Revelation of God's Faithfulness

God's self-revelation as promise leads to a different understanding of God's being. As noted by C. Morse, when the question of *how* God is revealed is followed by that of *what* of God is revealed, God's self in the general answer of that God reveals God's self would have different sense.<sup>31</sup> He considers that "the who and the what of revelation cannot be understood apart from *how* revelation occurs".<sup>32</sup>

When a promise is fulfilled, what is revealed is the faithfulness of the promisor. Therefore, "'God himself'," Moltmann writes, "cannot be understood as reflection on his transcendent I-ness, but must be understood as his self-sameness in historical fidelity to his promise."<sup>33</sup> Morse makes a remark on this: "The contrast he draws is between

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<sup>31</sup> C. Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p.41.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>33</sup> TH, p.116.

*Ichheit* and *Selbigkeit*, between God's transcendental selfhood and his historical faithfulness."<sup>34</sup> Meeks puts this contrast further: "The revelation of God is not the unveiling of the essence of God in terms of the essence of history, of existence, or the divine name. Rather revelation is the demonstration of God's faithfulness to his promise".<sup>35</sup> "God is known not as a transcendental self beyond history, but as one who pledges himself to do things in history - to implement his righteousness, to accomplish his lordship in the world".<sup>36</sup> In a word, what is revealed is God's faithfulness, not his eternal presence.

#### 2.2.4.2 History of this World as the Predicate of God's Self-Revelation

In this way of God's self-revelation, the history of this world is to be justified as meaningful by God's promise and its fulfillment. On the one hand, God's promise "originates, drives and directs the process of history".<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, as the promise is to be fulfilled by God himself, "history has to be understood as a predicate of the eschatological revelation".<sup>38</sup> God's faithfulness to his

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<sup>34</sup> Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology*, p.41.

<sup>35</sup> Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, p.72.

<sup>36</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.31.

<sup>37</sup> *TH*, p.75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76.



promise "makes the history of this world a constituent of God's self-revelation".<sup>39</sup>

The history of this world, then, is not something that stands in contrast to God's being. God's self-revelation does not negate the history of this world.

If "history" is a predicate of God's self-revelation, then "this world" is a predicate of God's self-disclosure aswell. This is because the former is the history of "this world", not the history itself. This world is not merely a recipient of God's word when God reveals himself in his promise. Rather, it is made to be a constituent of God's self-revelation when the history of this world is created by God's promise. Therefore, as something other than God, this world does not stand in contradiction to God but is involved in his self disclosure.

It follows that God does not stand in contrast to the world, not like the case in the revelation in the epiphany of the eternal presence.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.31.

<sup>40</sup> R.S. Chopp misunderstands that an antithesis exists between God and the world. "Theology, in Moltmann's work, substantively interprets the narratives of God while it formally reveals the contradiction between God and world." [*The Paraxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (New York: Orbis, 1986), p.102, cf. p.106.]

#### 2.2.4.3 Revelation in Dialectical Way

The saying that God reveals himself in a dialectical way does not mean that God's self-revelation is a kind of divineself-negation. It does mean that the present reality reveals God in a dialectical way. That is, God is revealed through the negation of the present reality. This is because "the revealing of the divinity of God ... depends entirely on the real fulfillment of the promise"<sup>41</sup> which is totally opposite to the present reality.

Epistemologically, when God reveals himself in the way of promise, he does not disclose himself analogically through the present reality of this world. "The absolute is not ... extrapolated from the presently available reality."<sup>42</sup> The relationship of God's being to the present reality is not an analogical one. The former cannot be reflected by the latter. Consequently, God's self-revelation is not a kind of immediate disclosure of his eternal presence. The analogical principle is not applicable to this way of revelation.

Indeed, God reveals himself through the negation of the present reality of this world. Nothing in the present reality can reflect God's being. Conversely, it is the opposite side of the present reality that can disclose God.

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<sup>41</sup> TH, p.86.

<sup>42</sup> FH, p.11.

That is, he reveals himself in the reality which stands in contradiction to the present one.

In sum, epistemologically, God reveals himself in the dialectical way, not analogical. Accordingly, what is revealed in this way is God's faithfulness, rather than his eternal presence. And the changeableness of this world is justified as well. It follows that God's relationship to this world is not a kind of relationship between eternity and transience. In other words, ontologically, there is not any two levels of reality and dual tracks of time.

## 2.3 The Dialectical Movement of the Promissory History

### 2.3.1 The Character of God's Promise (II): Non-Mechanical Schema

When a specific historic future is fulfilled, it seems that the history is running to its end. However, this is not the case that happens in Israel's promissory history. Moltmann in his explanation of the concept of promise clearly states: "the Old testament promises ... were not liquidated by the history of Israel - neither by disappointment nor by fulfillment - but that on the contrary Israel's experience of history gave them a

constantly new and wider interpretation".<sup>43</sup> This means that no matter what happens to God's promise, either fulfillment or disappointment, Israel's history is still moving on. But how could this be possible? That is, why is God's promise not to be liquidated by fulfillments but can be re-interpreted with a new and wider content?

To this, Moltmann's answer is that: "the God who is recognized in his promises remains superior to any fulfillment that can be experienced, because in every fulfillment the promise, and what is still contained in it, does not yet become wholly congruent with reality and thus there always remains an overspill".<sup>44</sup> What Moltmann tries to point out here is the non-mechanical structure of God's promise. There "can be no burning interest in constructing a hard and fast juridical system of historic necessities according to a schema of promise and fulfillment".<sup>45</sup> For him, God's promise and fulfillment cannot be treated as an abstract schema with historic necessity.<sup>46</sup> Instead of this, Moltmann proposes what is disclosed by God's promise is to be seen as a movable horizon rather than a fixed boundary until it reaches its ultimate.

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<sup>43</sup> TH, p.104. Bauckham considers that Moltmann's exposition of this point (TH, pp.105-106) owes a good deal to E. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice and P. Knight (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.178-195. See *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.151, n.8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.105.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.104.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp.106, 112.

### 2.3.2 Expanding the Horizon of History

As pointed out by Meeks, the notion of the "history of promise" is von Rad's greatest legacy to the theology of hope.<sup>47</sup> For von Rad, Israel's history happens in the tension between "promise" and "fulfillment" which expresses a "periodizing of history".<sup>48</sup> "The gradual progression ... from a promise to its fulfillment and from there to the next promise introduces an inner movement into history which keeps it open for the future."<sup>49</sup> Von Rad writes: "Here everything is in motion, the accounts never balance, and fulfillment unexpectedly gives rise in turn to another promise of something greater still. Here nothing has its ultimate meaning in itself, but is always an earnest of something still greater".<sup>50</sup> Von Rad notes that fulfillment gives rise to another greater promise. However, he does not ask further: in what way does this happen? It follows that he does not propose any theological concept in understanding the transformation of the fulfillment. Although Moltmann owes a great deal to von Rad in

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<sup>47</sup> Meeks, *Origins of Theology of Hope*, pp.70-71. On Moltmann's reception of von Rad, see pp.70-73. For a detailed introduction to von Rad's interpretation of Old Testament, see J.L. Crenshaw,  *Gerhard von Rad* (Texas: Word Books, 1978).

<sup>48</sup> H.G. Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1985), p.75.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> G. von Rad, "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments", *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952), p.29. Cited from *TH*, p.107.

understanding Israelite history, he does not yet get the proper concept from von Rad in understanding the operation of its dialectical movement.

Moltmann employs H.-G. Gadamer's hermeneutical concept of "horizon" to help explain the dialectical movement of the promissory history. Gadamer understands that "a horizon is not a rigid frontier, but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further".<sup>51</sup> C.E. Braaten's explanation of the meaning of horizon in phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy is worth noting:

In phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy *horizon* is a field of vision which includes two sides, one subjective and the other objective. The horizon of the viewer is his subjective standpoint, how he looks out upon the world. The objective pole is the wide range of what comes into view, the outer limits within which anything that appears has its place and meaning. A horizon, accordingly, is not to be thought of as merely subjective or objective, but involves a dynamic situation in which the horizon of the subject attempts to expand continually to overtake the horizon of all that is not yet known. Thus, a horizon is not a closed and fixed situation,<sup>52</sup> neither on the subjective nor on the objective side.

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<sup>51</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, ed. G. Barden and J. Cumming (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), p.217. For a detailed and comprehensive exposition of *Truth and Method*, see J.C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985). And a good introduction to Gadamer's hermeneutics can be found in: R.E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp.162-217; J. Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp.108-116.

<sup>52</sup> C.E. Braaten, *The Future of God: The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p.168, n.12.

Braaten clearly explains that horizon is both objective and subjective. Also it is not fixed and closed but attempts to expand itself continually so as to be the horizon of all.

Moltmann applies this concept of horizon to understand the boundary of history which is disclosed by God's promise. If the horizon of history is moving along with people, then the event which fulfills the promise does not put an end to God's promise because it is within the time-span. There is another boundary ahead for people to pursue. Everything which happens within this new horizon, then, has an unfinished and provisional character that points forwards because there is still something that is outstanding, not yet finalized, not yet realized.<sup>53</sup> All fulfillments are denied as the completions of God's promise so that they are to be treated as the realities that can be left behind.

However, "the 'fulfillments' are taken as expositions, confirmations and expansion of the promise".<sup>54</sup> They are being integrated into the promise so as to expand it. In this way, God's promise is being transformed into a greater one and in turn the horizon of history it discloses will be wider as well. "The greater the fulfillments become, the greater the promise obviously also becomes in the memory of

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<sup>53</sup> TH, p.107.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.105.

the expositor at the various levels of the tradition in which it is handed down."<sup>55</sup>

Then, humanity is set on the move and experiences reality as history once again, but with a greater promised future and a broader horizon of history.

In this sense, "the tension of promise and fulfillment was not left behind by the simple progress of Israel's history, but was much more strongly creative of Israel's historic progress".<sup>56</sup> On the one hand, the moving horizon historicizes all fulfillments so as to prevent their completion of God's promise. On the other hand, these fulfillments are preserved in the memory of Israelite history as the confirmations of the promise so as to point forward. In this way, humanity is led to "a break-away from the present towards the future".<sup>57</sup> History is moving on.

R.S. Chopp gives a summarized account of Israelite history: "The call to Abraham can be best understood as a promise to be filled, transformed, and filled again; this call appropriately becomes paradigmatic for Israel. The history of Israel is now a journey, a journey of faith and

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.100.



hope toward a future".<sup>58</sup> She considers that "the continual filling, overfilling, and reinterpreting of God's promises to Israel is what Moltmann calls the 'overspill' of God's promise".<sup>59</sup>

However, when will this filling, overfilling and reinterpreting of God's promise stop? To what extent does the horizon of history expand? What is the final frontier of such a horizon? For Braaten, this horizon "attempt to expand continually to overtake the horizon of all that is not yet known".<sup>60</sup> According to Moltmann, the horizon will stop its moving only when it reaches the *eschaton*. At this time, God's promise becomes eschatological and the promised future will be the ultimate.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.3.3 The Ultimate Horizon of God's Promise

For Moltmann, God's promise becomes eschatological in the hands of the classical prophets and the postexilic apocalypticists. What is meant by the concept of eschatological promise? Moltmann says: "Those promises and expectations are eschatological which are directed towards

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<sup>58</sup> Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*, p.104.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Braaten, *The Future of God: The Revolutionary Dynamic of Hope*, p.168, n.12.

<sup>61</sup> TH, pp.124-138.

a historical future in the sense of the ultimate horizon".<sup>62</sup>

However, what is meant by the concept of ultimate horizon? How can it be the final boundary? What does this horizon attain so that it is ultimate? In sum, under what conditions does the horizon become ultimate? The horizon reaches a no more beyond boundary when it satisfies two conditions. The first one is its universality: embracing all peoples (in prophetic) and the cosmos (in apocalyptic). The second one is its intensification: reaching the ultimate human and cosmos reality as such.

Moltmann explains further why these two conditions make the horizon of God's promise ultimate so that his promise is eschatological. The horizon can be ultimate only at the point where it "embraces in the *eschaton* the *proton* of the whole creation ... extends to all peoples, for there is nothing that can be conceived as wider in extent than that".<sup>63</sup> This is the quantitative aspect of the *eschaton*. "Along with this universalizing, there goes also an intensification of the promise up to the limits of existence as such."<sup>64</sup> This means that the horizon must reach beyond the final boundary of existence: death. This is the qualitative aspect. If death is experienced as

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

exclusion from the promise of fullness and consummation of life, then the hope of overcoming this boundary of life must be exemplified in God's eschatological promise.<sup>65</sup>

"Only when the horizon of expectation extends beyond what is felt to be the final boundary of existence, i.e. beyond the bounds of death, does it reach an *eschaton*, a *non plus ultra*, a *novum ultimum*."<sup>66</sup>

With this understanding of the ultimate horizon of God's eschatological promise, one then comes to realize that God's promise ultimately is a promise for the ultimate future of the whole creation which stands in contrast to the present suffering reality.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Moltmann starts his doctrine of revelation with the way of promise. He objects any metaphysical or ontological presupposition that conditions God's way of revealing himself. Rather it is the latter determines what is revealed because it is the way God chooses to reveal himself. It is in this sense that the epistemological how gets the priority over the ontological what. The principle which is underlying God's self-revelation in the way of promise, then, is dialectical rather than analogical.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp.131-132.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.132.

He asserts that God reveals himself in the way of promise. Then, God reveals himself in the future which is contradictory to the present reality when he fulfills his promise. And in the ultimate future God does not merely reveal his faithfulness but is also present analogically. Meanwhile, a history of transforming the present reality of this world is created until this world is totally congruous with God's promise.

However, two problems are left. Firstly, does God reveal himself only when the promise to the world is fulfilled? Does this mean that God is present in the future only but not in the present? In order to avoid the revelation in the way of the epiphany of the eternal present, will Moltmann's alternative of revelation in the promise pay the price of sacrificing God's presence at present?

Secondly, when God's promise reaches its ultimate horizon in breadth and in depth, he is going to be revealed as a God of all who overcomes the bounds of death. But the analysis of the way which God reveals himself does not display that God of the promise is a God who can overcome the final boundary of existence. How can this promise be fulfilled? Is there any guarantee for the fulfillment of this great promise?

It is in the Christ event that these two questions can be clearly answered.

### 3 Analogy and Its Ahistorical Character

#### 3.1 God's Presence in the Present

##### 3.1.1 The Problem of God's Presence in the Present

In *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann "rejected the kind of natural theology which finds God evident in or deducible from the world, on the grounds that the world does not yet correspond to the coming God".<sup>1</sup> Epistemologically, God is not to be known or revealed through the present world. The analogical principle of knowledge is not appropriate. This is because, ontologically, there is not any analogical relationship between God and the present reality of this world. However, it will be possible when the world corresponds to the promised future.

Actually, Moltmann's proposal of revealing in the way of promise precisely stands in contrast to the assertion that there is a correspondence between God's being and the present world. Rather, God's faithfulness is revealed in the future when the present reality is transformed to correspond to the promise. Therefore, God is present in the future reality of this world analogically. However, does

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<sup>1</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.57.

this mean that God is not present in the present reality in any sense?

"Moltmann is severely critical of any understanding of revelation which thinks of it as a kind of epiphany, by which he means a present, static, unchanging manifestation of God."<sup>2</sup> "We have noted that 'epiphany' is a bad word with Moltmann. An entire tradition of Christian theology and spirituality, centring on what John Ballie called 'the sense of the presence of God', is thus summarily dismissed."<sup>3</sup> For J. MacQuarrie, Moltmann's doctrine of revelation denies God's presence. Therefore he says: "We need presence as well as promise."<sup>4</sup> It seems to him that in Moltmann's thought God's presence and God's promise are mutually exclusive. However, as C. Morse points out, "Moltmann's theory does not deny the *presence* of God in revelation but rather an 'eternal presence'".<sup>5</sup> "Promise is itself a mode of presence, but promissory presence must not be confused with eternal presence."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> J. MacQuarrie, "Today's Word for Today: I. Jürgen Moltmann", *Expository Times* 92/1 (1980), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> J. MacQuarrie, *Thinking about God* (London: SCM, 1975), p.230. [ = "Theologies of Hope: A Critical Examination", *Expository Times* 82/4 (1971), p.104.]

<sup>4</sup> J. MacQuarrie, "Eschatology and Time" in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. F. Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p.123.

<sup>5</sup> C. Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

For Moltmann, God is present in the future as well as in the present. He further distinguishes God's presence in the future from God's presence in the present by taking the latter as the "presence of God on the way" and the former as the "presence of God at the goal of the way of promise".<sup>7</sup> God is present in his promise.<sup>8</sup> God's presence in the present happens when God announces a future reality for the world.

Indeed, God's presence in promise differs itself from eternal presence in that it is not a kind of presence in the present reality analogically. However, the way in which God announces the promise will affect the meaning of God's presence in the present. To put it simply, there are two kinds of promissory presence in Moltmann's doctrine of revelation, namely, in words and in *Word*.

### 3.1.2. God's Presence In Words and in *Word*

It is obvious that for Moltmann in the Old Testament God gives his promise in terms of words while in New Testament God offers his promise in terms of *Word*, that is, Jesus Christ. Although Moltmann does not explicitly use these two terms to describe God's way of giving promise, these two ways do exist in Moltmann's doctrine of

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<sup>7</sup> RRF, p.211.

<sup>8</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.29.

revelation and affect one's understanding of God and his relationship to the world.

Moltmann calls God's promise a word promise when he talks of God revealing himself in the promise to Israel.<sup>9</sup> God gives his promise to Israel in the form of words. If this promise is a word promise and God is present in his promise, then God is present as an announcer of the promise. God is present in his word but does not participate in the present reality analogically. This implies that God is not present in the present reality analogically, but in the future reality analogically.<sup>10</sup>

When God gives his promise in Christ's resurrection, God himself enters the dialectic of life and death. That

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<sup>9</sup> TH, p.102.

<sup>10</sup> Later Moltmann in his *The Crucified God* expresses the point that in the Old Testament God is suffered from Israel's disobedience and is injured by man: "He enters not only into the situation of the limited creature, but even into the situation of the guilty and suffering creature." (p.273) He goes on: "These accommodations of God to the limitations of human history at the same time contain anticipations of his future indwelling in his whole creation, when in the end all lands will be full of his glory." (p.273) It seems that God is present in the present world dialectically. However, God's suffering alone cannot constitute God's promise to the world unless it is accompanied by the negation of God's suffering. In this view, the fact that God participates in the present suffering reality does not necessarily mean that in his self-revelation God is present in the present reality dialectically as well. On the other hand, the fact that God is present in his word but not the present reality analogically in his self-revelation does not exclude the possibility that God can share the suffering of this abandoned world in his other interaction with it. Nevertheless, either view of God's presence does deny the idea of analogical presence in the present reality.



is, God displays his promise by constituting it with his own negations. This is because Christ's resurrection is the negation of his death and Christ's death is God's self-negation. According to Moltmann, on the cross God identifies himself with the forsaken reality of this world. Therefore, God is present in the present reality dialectically. And when the present reality is negated, God is present in the future reality analogically as well.

### 3.2 Dialectic, Analogy, and History

The two ways mentioned above have two common points. Firstly, there is not any analogical relationship between God and the present reality. Secondly, analogical relationship can only be possible in the future which contradicts the present. But this does not mean that God cannot enter the present reality. If God cannot be present in the present reality analogically, then it is possible for him to be present in it dialectically. This is precisely the significant point that should be noted in the promise event. Dialectic precedes analogy.

In words God only negates the present reality of this world so as to initiate its history.<sup>11</sup> In *Word* God negates his self-negation through which God identifies himself with

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<sup>11</sup> Moltmann calls this history "word-history", a history of tradition or the history of the working of the traditional hope. (TH, p.153.)

the world. Therefore, the history God creates is both of God and this world. In other words, two consequences follow God's giving his promise in Christ's resurrection. Firstly, God enters the history of this world. Secondly, he initiates his own history as well as the history of this world. Indeed, through God's self-negation, God enters the history of this world and the history of this world is taken up into God's history. Their histories are interwoven into one another from the very beginning of God's history.

In Moltmann's view, one cannot understand God's relationship to the present reality in terms of analogy. If a metaphysical distinction between God and the world is presupposed: eternal and temporal; non-evanescent and evanescent,<sup>12</sup> then the analogical principle is the way to make God's revelation in the form of the epiphany of the eternal presence possible. It follows that such a God of the epiphany will be the one who is not involved in the suffering of this world. In this way, God is revealed as an ahistorical God who does not share the destiny of this world.

On the other hand, atheism employs the analogical principle to argue that there is no God because suffering exists in the present reality and God does not overcome it. Therefore, a kind of antinomy will be produced: God is and

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *TKG*, p.158.

God is not. Both of theism<sup>13</sup> and atheism<sup>14</sup> proceed their argument with the same reasoning principle but get contradictory results. However, they both agree to the point that God cannot suffer. Therefore, if there is God, he is a God who does not participate in the suffering history of this world.

These are precisely the problems aroused by the analogical principle of which Moltmann explicitly criticizes in his *The Crucified God*. This chapter will take a close look at the structure of the analogical principle and its significance for the doctrine of God, especially its ahistorical character. After that, the dialectical character of the Christ event will be analysed.

### 3.3 The Use of Analogy

Moltmann points out that "Christian theology very early adopted the epistemological principle of the Platonic school and introduced the principle of analogy into its doctrine of the knowledge of God".<sup>15</sup> "Either the invisible God is known in the analogies to him in the order of creation or in the acts of history which point to him, or else he is known in his self-revelation, or only in the

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<sup>13</sup> *CG*, p.210.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.210-220.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

Holy Spirit of God."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it is Plato who first introduces the concept of analogy into the philosophical fields of epistemology and ontology.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, a brief analysis of Plato's use of analogy in his philosophy is necessary before one is going to understand its use in Christian theology.

### 3.3.1 Platonic Philosophy

According to B. Mondin, Plato uses the word "analogy" in both its meanings of proportion (i.e. direct similarity) and proportionality (i.e. the similarity of relations).<sup>18</sup> He calls "analogy" the proportion of two things or of two concepts, the proportion between things and ideas, or between knowledge and things known.<sup>19</sup> He uses it to signify the proportionality between four elements (fire/air = air/water = water/earth),<sup>20</sup> between the four forms of knowledge (knowledge/opinion = thinking/imagining),<sup>21</sup> and between two kinds of being and two kind of knowledge

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> B. Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp.1-2. Cf. W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M.J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p.95.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 508b; *Timaeus*, 29c.

<sup>20</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 32c.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 534a.

(being/becoming = knowledge/opinion).<sup>22</sup> However, it is important to note the philosophical context in which Plato uses analogy.

Plato's ontology and epistemology is established around his theory of Forms or Ideas. As said by P.M. Huby, "this 'theory' is not set out in full anywhere in the dialogues, and on many points the dialogues are uninformative or inconsistent".<sup>23</sup> However, it may be reconstructed in its essentials without much difficulty. "The forms were universals, but not merely universals; they were unchanging objects existing apart from this world and more real than it, knowable by the mind as opposed to the senses, and the source of the existence of particular things in this world."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, "fundamental to Plato's ontology and epistemology is the division between what is sensible and what can be grasped by the intellect only, between the world of senses and the world of Forms".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> P.M. Huby, "Socrates and Plato", in *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. D.J. O'Connor (Toronto: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p.18. For a detailed outline of Plato's discussion of Forms see D.J. Melling, *Understanding Plato* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.96-124; C.J. Rowe, *Plato* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984), pp.52-86.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> D. Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (London: SCM, 1985), p.47.

Plato's ontology is a theory of two worlds: the intelligible realm of Forms and the physical, visible world of particular things. The world of Forms is constituted by ideal objects which are invisible and intangible.<sup>26</sup> "They exist eternally, with a transcendent nature that set them apart from our world, but by a process of 'creation', the visible world has been modelled after them, and their essential qualities are diffused down into the particular things that we touch and see."<sup>27</sup>

These two worlds share different degrees of reality. "Reality is concentrated in the invisible world of Forms, which are *more real* than the fleeting and insubstantial particulars in the world. But particulars are not viewed as totally unreal. They share to some extent in reality in so far as Forms are present in them."<sup>28</sup> Correspondingly, different degrees or levels of knowledge are distinguished according to objects of different degrees of reality:<sup>29</sup> opinion and knowledge. The former is formed by apprehending the changing phenomena of the visible world on the basis of sense perception and thereby is flawed by contradictions and illusions.<sup>30</sup> The latter is the true knowledge which is

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<sup>26</sup> J.V. Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), p.100.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol I: *Greece and Rome* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1956), p.151.

<sup>30</sup> Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy*, p.100.

infallible and of the real.<sup>31</sup> It "does not rest in any way on sense perception, but is a function of the mind making direct contact with the Form".<sup>32</sup> "In terms of what it is (ontologically considered) and in terms of the truth that can be known from it (epistemologically considered) the sensible world is like a shadow or reflection of the intelligible world."<sup>33</sup>

Because the visible world imitates or participates in the realm of Forms, the word "analogy" is used to express that there is a certain proportion between these two. Likewise, the relationship between knowledge of the invisible and intangible form and opinion of the world of sense is proportional. For Plato, "both our minds and the outer world have the same shared order".<sup>34</sup> Therefore, there is an analogy between these two kind of knowledge.

Plato does not explicitly use the word analogy to express the way of apprehending the real knowledge of the Forms. However, he does open the door for the Neoplatonists to develop the doctrine of analogy in the field of theology. Firstly, Plato uses it to signify the proportion between two worlds. It should be noted that such a use of

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<sup>31</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol I: *Greece and Rome*, p.149.

<sup>32</sup> Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy*, p.100.

<sup>33</sup> Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, p.50.

<sup>34</sup> R.S. Brumbaugh, *The Philosophers of Greece* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p.148.

analogy presupposes that the visible world gets its reality by sharing, imitating or participating in the really real invisible world. Secondly, Plato explains the mind making direct contact with the Forms in terms of *anamnesis*, the recall of the knowledge acquired before birth.<sup>35</sup> However, the recall is possible only when the "latent memories of the relevant Forms are being elicited through experience of the particular things in which they are imperfectly exemplified".<sup>36</sup> In other words, the invisible world of Forms is known through the present visible world of particular things.

### 3.3.2 Neoplatonism

According to Mondin, "it is only with Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius that the term 'analogy' enters into theological discourse".<sup>37</sup> In the theology of the Neoplatonists, analogy has two main functions. First, it accounts for the possibility of speaking of God. Second, analogy provides a principle of unity between the various levels of reality.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Huby, "Socrates and Plato", pp.20, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Luce, *An Introduction to Greek Philosophy*, p.105.

<sup>37</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



The philosophy of the Neoplatonists<sup>39</sup> is a modification of Plato's. "The world-picture presented is based on certain features of orthodox Platonism, but there is also much that is different."<sup>40</sup> It can be summarized as follows: "Reality is a continuum with a centre from which, as it were, circles expand outward. There is reality throughout living, and it is based on a power that works from the centre. Secondary things are timelessly dependent upon what is prior in power; hence there is no temporal creation but a constant outgoing (*proodos*) from the centre, whereby mind enters into matter. Higher things determine lower things without being affected themselves."<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that Neoplatonism is not a kind of pantheism.<sup>42</sup> The Neoplatonists propose a doctrine of emanation which is based on a peculiar theory of causality<sup>43</sup> to explain that "multiplicity is the result of the overflow of the One 'downward'".<sup>44</sup> Firstly, true

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<sup>39</sup> A comprehensive introduction to the Neoplatonism can be seen in R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972).

<sup>40</sup> D.W. Hamlyn, "Greek Philosophy after Aristotle", in *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. D.J. O'Connor (Toronto: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p.76.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol I: *Greece and Rome*, p.467.

<sup>43</sup> E.R. Dodds, *Introduction to Select Passages Illustrating Neoplatonism* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923), p.16.

<sup>44</sup> Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, p.75.

causality is a "timeless relation of dependence between Beings; 'creation' is only a metaphor to express this dependence".<sup>45</sup> Secondly, it is a "one-sided relation: that is, the higher determines the lower without being determined by its own causative activity; it gives itself to the lower, yet itself remains undiminished and affected".<sup>46</sup> Thirdly, "there is nothing in the effect which does not exist *eminenter* in the cause; but the cause is never perfectly mirrored in the effect".<sup>47</sup>

In this way, a hierarchy of different degrees of reality is formed. "Reality is proportionately distributed in different degree."<sup>48</sup> This proportionate distribution is called analogy.<sup>49</sup> Ontologically, analogy can be used to describe the relationship of the Many to the One, the world to God. It can be seen as a cosmological principle in Neoplatonism.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Dodds, *Introduction to Select Passages Illustrating Neoplatonism*, p.16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in the Protestant and Catholic Theology*, pp.3-4

<sup>49</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid (London: SPCK, 1987), 588A, p.49; 372D, p.196.

<sup>50</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in the Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.4, n.1.

On the base that nothing in the effect does not exist *eminenter* in the cause, it is possible to speak of God. "Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients."<sup>51</sup> "Now, God is the cause of everything. Hence all created perfections may be ascribed to Him."<sup>52</sup> However, the "effect, or being that proceeds, is partly similar to the cause or source of emanation and partly dissimilar".<sup>53</sup> Therefore, two ways of approaching God are proposed: the positive way (cataphatic) and the negative way (apophatic).<sup>54</sup>

In brief, "the affirmative method means ascribing to God the perfections found in creatures, that is, the perfections which are compatible with the spiritual Nature of God, though not existing in Him in the same manner as they exist in creatures".<sup>55</sup> In the negative way "the mind

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<sup>51</sup> Proclus, *The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation and Commentary*, trans. E.R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), prop.18, p.21.

<sup>52</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.3.

<sup>53</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol I: *Greece and Rome*, p.479.

<sup>54</sup> Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, p.90. The doctrine of two ways of approaching God is firstly articulated by Pseudo-Dionysius in his *The Divine Name* and *The Mystical Theology*. Later, it is accepted by Thomas Aquinas. Cf. F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol II: *Mediaeval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1950), pp.94-95.

<sup>55</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol II: *Mediaeval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus*, p.94.

begins by denying of God those things which are farthest removed from Him, e.g. 'drunkenness or fury', and proceeds upwards progressively denying of God the attributes and qualities of creatures, until it reaches 'the super-essential Darkness'.<sup>56</sup> Apparently, these two ways of knowing God are adopted and modified by Thomas Aquinas as his theological doctrine of analogy containing three interconnected steps: *via affirmationis* (way of affirmation), *via negationis* (way of negation) and *via eminentiae* (way of eminence).<sup>57</sup>

Analogy, then, gets its epistemological meaning in the hand of the Neoplatonists. That is, one can approach God through the present reality of the world in the ways of positive and negative on the ground that the world, ontologically, is the effect of God the cause.

### 3.3.3 Thomas Aquinas' Natural Theology

W. Pannenberg points out that "the Scholastics ... thought that not only their language about God but also God himself was analogous to the world of human experience."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>57</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, pp.96-97.

<sup>58</sup> W. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in the Theology: Collected Essays* vol I, trans. G.H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p.223; cf. p.213.

He goes on: "This was a consequence of the fact that they understood God primarily as the cause of the world."<sup>59</sup>

Here two points should be noted. Firstly, an analogical knowledge of God is possible because "the reality of God stands in an analogical relationship to the world".<sup>60</sup>

Secondly, such an analogical relationship is possible because the world is the effect of God the cause. In sum, "according to the doctrine of analogy, the effects produced by God are the basis of what is said about God himself, following the maxim about knowing the unknown by analogy with the known".<sup>61</sup> Such a point of view is expressed explicitly in Thomas Aquinas' natural theology.<sup>62</sup>

Aquinas says: "Now any effect of a cause demonstrates that that cause exists, in case where the effect is better known to us, since effects are dependent upon causes, and can only occur if the causes already exist. From effects evident to us, therefore, we can demonstrate what in itself is not evident to us, namely, that God exists."<sup>63</sup> It is based on this ground that his five ways of proof of God's

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.213.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.215.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Mondin, *The principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.85.

<sup>63</sup> T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation* vol 2, ed. T. Gilby and T.C. O'Brien (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), Ia.2,2; p.11.

existence outlined in the *Summa Theologiae*<sup>64</sup> "begin by stating some observation - or, rather, by calling attention to some particular feature in the structure of the universe".<sup>65</sup> Kasper gives a summary of this cosmological argument. "Thomas takes as his starting point various aspects of the world of our experience (movement, causality, contingency, degrees of being, purposefulness). He then inquires into the cause of these phenomena. In this search for a cause it is not possible to engage in an infinite regress in its entirety as a series, no less than in its individual members since the series of causes is itself contingent and therefore requires an explanatory ground. There must therefore be a first cause that is not to be understood simply as the first member in a series of causes, but that grounds this series in its entirety and cannot itself have its ground in a higher cause. It must therefore be understood as self-subsistent, complete being, as that fullness of being which we call God."<sup>66</sup>

Aquinas' cosmological argument presupposes that there is similarity between cause and effect. The "effects will

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Ia.2,3; pp.13-19.

<sup>65</sup> K. Tranoy, "Thomas Aquinas", in *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. D.J. O'Connor (Toronto: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p.109.

<sup>66</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, p.101. A detailed analysis of Aquinas' five ways proof can be found in A. Kenny, *The Five Ways: St Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

bear an even remoter resemblance to the agent"<sup>67</sup> because "a cause or agent can act or produce an effect, only by producing something that bears some similarity to itself, since causality (ability to act) belongs to a being insofar as it is in act".<sup>68</sup> A "cause cannot produce effect of any sort, but necessarily produces effect according to its nature (its actuality, its form)".<sup>69</sup> Based on this, an analogy of intrinsic attribution is established so as to provide an adequate interpretation for the God-creature relationship and a justification for theological language.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, "finite reality (creatures) points to God, since it is caused by God".<sup>71</sup> For Kasper, establishing the causal relationship between God and the world is the first step of the theological doctrine of analogy: "The *via affirmationis* (way of affirmation) takes as its starting point the positive connection between the finite and the infinite, as this emerges from creation; it knows God from his effects in the world".<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation* vol 2, Ia.4,3; p.57.

<sup>68</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, pp.86-87.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, p.96.

According to Aquinas, as *the* primary and *per se* cause, God brings out effects like himself.<sup>73</sup> "God, however, is not univocal but an equivocal cause, since every creature must fall short of the perfection of divine goodness."<sup>74</sup> It is important to note here that although the world as the effect of God resembles God's perfection, it is not as perfect as God. It follows that "effects can give comprehensive knowledge of their cause only when commensurate with it".<sup>75</sup> That is, effects which are not proportionate to their cause do not give us perfect knowledge of their cause. In this way, "man may always take either a negative or a positive attitude with regard to the attribution to God of the name of any perfection".<sup>76</sup>

"Now, in considering the divine substance, we should especially make use of the method of remotion ... For we know each thing more perfectly the more fully we see its difference from other things, for each thing has within itself its own being, distinct from all other things."<sup>77</sup> The second step of the theological doctrine of analogy,

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<sup>73</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.93.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation* vol 2, Ia.2,2; p.11.

<sup>76</sup> Mondin, *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, p.98.

<sup>77</sup> T. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. A.C. Pegis (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I.14,2; pp.96-97.



then, is the *via negationis* (way of negation) that "denies the finite mode inherent in our statements and in the embodiment of all perfections in the finite realm".<sup>78</sup> This negative way or way of remotion (*via remotionis*) is, in fact, a method of elimination.<sup>79</sup> Firstly, through this way God is said to be immutable (without change), eternal (not in time), pure act (without potentiality), incorporeal, and simple (without composition).<sup>80</sup> "There cannot be in God corporeality, composition, limitation, imperfection, temporality, etc."<sup>81</sup> All the finitude of creatures must be negated so as to distinguish the infinite God from the finite world. Secondly, the finite mode of all perfections in the finite realm is denied so as to make a difference between God's perfection and that of this world.

It follows that the third step is the *via eminentiae* (way of eminence): "these finite perfections belong to God in a higher degree, in a more sublime manner, and, in fact, in a simply all surpassing way (*eminenter*)".<sup>82</sup>

Aquinas' doctrine of analogy is, in essence, grounded on the causal relationship of God to the world. Based on

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<sup>78</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, p.96.

<sup>79</sup> Tranoy, "Thomas Aquinas", p.112.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>81</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol II: *Mediaeval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus*, p.350.

<sup>82</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, pp.96-97.

the analogical connection between God and the world, a way of knowing God is developed which starts with the experience of the world: knowing the unknown by analogy with the known.

### 3.4 The Ontological and Epistemological Character of Analogy

The analogy used in this kind of thought has two dimensions. It is not confined to the epistemological field, but is applied to the relationship between two analogates as well. To put it further, its ontological significance provides a ground for the speaking of God analogically. In other words, the possibility of using analogy in the field of epistemology is based on its ontological dimension.

#### 3.4.1 One-Sided Relationship of God to the World

First of all, there is an unbroken link between God and the world. The cosmos is understood as indirect theophany.<sup>83</sup> However, the ontological relationship between the analogates, God and the world, is one-sided. As the cause of the world, God determines its being and existence. Conversely, as the effect of God, the world does not have any influence on God. This means that the world is not

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<sup>83</sup> TH, pp.77-78, n.7.

necessary for God. The world depends on God but not vice versa. The ontological dependence between the world and God is one-sided.

Because the world is the effect of God, it resembles God's nature. There is a likeness between God and the world, just like that between cause and effect. It is this likeness which connects the analogates, God and the world. But what is this likeness? "In the first place it is only a one-way likeness, that is the creature is like God, but we cannot properly say that God is like the creature."<sup>84</sup> This is because the world is out of God and it merely shares a certain extent of reality of God, not the whole. The effect is not equal to the cause. "In the second place creatures are only imperfectly like God; they cannot bear a perfect resemblance to him."<sup>85</sup> The world only shares a certain degree of reality of God, not the same. The "creature is *at the same time* both like and unlike God".<sup>86</sup> "It is like God in so far as it is an imitation of Him; it is unlike God in so far as its resemblance to Him is imperfect and deficient."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol II: *Mediaveal Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus*, p.355.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Cf. Aquinas: "... creatures resemble God, but not that God resembles creatures." (*Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation* vol 2, Ia.4,3; p.59.)

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp.355-356.

In this way, knowing God through the world is neither univocal nor equivocal but analogical.

#### 3.4.2 The Negation of Finitude

The way of knowing God is through the world by analogy. It is a kind of knowing the unknown by analogy with the known. Knowing through analogy, in Moltmann's words, is a process in which "like is known only by like".<sup>88</sup> Therefore, it is always a process of recognition.<sup>89</sup> The sole starting point is the experience of this world. Because this world is the effect of God, such a way of knowing, then, is an argument arguing from the effect back to the cause. Moltmann calls this retroflexive argument.<sup>90</sup>

Although the world is like God, it is not equal to God. Therefore, in order to approach God without getting any distortion from the world, the way of negation and way of eminence are two crucial steps being introduced into the doctrine of analogy. The former negates the finitude and the finite mode of all the perfections of the world while the latter qualifies the perfections transcendently. Then God is known as eternal, simple, immutable, incorporeal which are the negation of the temporality, composition,

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<sup>88</sup> *CG.*, p.26.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *TH*, pp.77-78, n.7.

changeableness, corporeality of this world, and with all the perfections as such.

The point worth noting here is that the function of the way of negation is an exclusion of the finitude of this world. It presupposes that there is a mutually exclusive relationship between infinite and finite. By negating the finitude of this world, God is known as the infinite which excludes the finite. In this way, the principle underlying the operation of the way of negation in analogy is that of excluded middle. And this is supported by the one-sided relationship of God to the world. God's perfection is shared by the world, but God is not affected by the world's imperfection. Imperfection totally belongs to the world but not God himself.<sup>91</sup> The way of negation manifests this merit in the field of epistemology.

### 3.5 Theological Consequences

Two consequences follow this way of God's self-revelation. The first one is its ahistorical nature. The second one is the antinomy of theism and atheism.

#### 3.5.1 Ahistorical Revelation and Ahistorical God

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<sup>91</sup> CG, p.214.

Moltmann clearly points out that the reality of God is assumed as "already present and immediately perceptible to every man"<sup>92</sup> in such analogical thought. He goes on: "There must be a reality accessible in experience and perception, which is at the same time related to God and corresponds to him, otherwise there would be no knowledge of God immediately accessible to every man".<sup>93</sup> In sum, there is a certain kind of correspondence between this world and God. In this way, this world does not need any change so that God can be reflected through his creatures correspondingly. The only problem is that such a correspondence is not a perfect one. That is, the reality of this world cannot reflect God's reality perfectly. In order to avoid distortion, the way of negation is introduced so as to know God properly. From the very beginning, the ontological grounding of the analogical principle of knowledge provides an ahistorical relationship of God to the world which further directs the process of knowing God.

It is the crucial step of analogical principle of knowledge, the way of negation, that renders God's self-revelation ahistorical. As mentioned above, the function of the way of negation in analogy is a kind of exclusion which can be represented by the principle of excluded middle. Indeed, the principle of excluded middle is one of the principles of thought of formal logic. It presupposes the

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<sup>92</sup> TH, p.282.

<sup>93</sup> CG, p.210.

other two principles: principle of identity and principle of non-contradiction.

According to G.W.F. Hegel, "the maxim of Identity, reads: Everything is identical with itself,  $A = A$ ; and, negatively,  $A$  cannot at the same time be  $A$  and not  $A$ ".<sup>94</sup> The latter is known as the principle of non-contradiction which further makes a limitation to the principle of identity.  $-(A \wedge -A)$  rejects the possibility of the emergence of both  $A = A$  and  $A = -A$  at the same time. Accordingly, the "Maxim of Excluded Middle is the maxim ... which would fain avoid contradiction ..."<sup>95</sup> "A must be either  $+A$  or  $-A$  ..."<sup>96</sup> If the principles of identity and non-contradiction are definitive, then that of excluded middle is operative that by denying the opposite it is either  $A$  or  $-A$ . By doing so,  $A = A$  is prevented from becoming both  $A = A$  and  $A = -A$  at the same time.

Here two points should be noted. Firstly, the way of negation in the doctrine of analogy is not a kind of self-negation in reality but in thought. The reality of this world will not be changed since the negation is operated in thought only. Secondly, what it is concerned with is the negation of the finitude of this world so as to grasp the

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<sup>94</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science (1830)*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), §115, p.167.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., §119, p.172.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

infinite invisible perfection of God in thought. The process of knowing God is completed in abstract thinking, not in history.

Furthermore, in this process of approaching God, an absolute ontological gulf is established between the infinite and the finite. Although the world is like an image reflecting a certain degree of perfection of God, it is finite in nature while God is infinite. Eventually, God cannot enter his opposite by negating himself because infinite and finite are contradictory. It follows that God cannot reveal himself in his opposition or contradiction. Otherwise, God will be a God of contradiction and he will lose his simple identity, according to the principles of identity and non-contradiction. And this precisely satisfies the one-way relationship of God to the world. Such a God cannot be affected and shaken by any suffering and injustice of this finite world.<sup>97</sup> In this way, God is an ahistorical God who will not share the destiny of the finite world because "death, suffering and mortality must ... be excluded from the divine being".<sup>98</sup>

However, according to Hegel, "if the infinite is distinct from the finite, it is limited by the finite and

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<sup>97</sup> CG, p.222.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.214.



is thus finite rather than infinite".<sup>99</sup> "If, e.g., God is distinct from the world, he is finite."<sup>100</sup> Then, God will not be the God in all because he is not present in his opposite. Moltmann expresses the similar point: "a God who is only omnipotent is in himself an incomplete being, for he cannot experience helplessness and powerlessness".<sup>101</sup> Therefore, he contends that the "absolute is not, *via eminentiae* or *via negationis*, extrapolated from the presently available reality".<sup>102</sup>

### 3.5.2 The Antinomy of Theism and Atheism

For Moltmann, theism and atheism are twins. They both share the same presupposition which is inherent in the theological doctrine of analogy. It should be noticed here that what Moltmann is concerned with is the analogy of being in Aquinas' natural theology or theism, rather than his discussion on the use of analogy in speaking of God.

Theism has different terms, but for the same thing: traditional theism, classical theism, metaphysical theism,

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<sup>99</sup> M. Wood, "Infinity" in *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.140. Cf. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science* (1830), §36, pp.58-59.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> CG, p.223.

<sup>102</sup> FH, p.11.

cosmological theism.<sup>103</sup> Aquinas' natural theology "stands as the fountainhead of traditional theism".<sup>104</sup> And the atheism discussed here arises in the context of and in response to traditional theism. It is the antithesis of traditional theism<sup>105</sup> and is better called protest atheism for its nature.

W.W. Willis, Jr. gives a good account of protest atheism. "It is based upon the perception of the extent and persistence of human pain and suffering. In the face of such misery, protest atheism says no to any God who would continue to allow such condition. How, this atheism asks, can one believe in God, who, though supposedly perfectly just and omnipotent, remains unmoved by and fails to response to injustice and human agony, who is impassible while his creatures suffer? That creation includes these conditions is incomprehensible already, but that there is a just God who would allow them to persist is a contradiction. For the sake of humanity and the human feeling for justice, God must be rejected."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> W.W. Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), p.9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp.79-80.

In Moltmann's view, "theism and protest atheism are related methodologically in that both draw conclusions about God by a process of abstracting from the world."<sup>107</sup>

In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann writes:

The cosmological arguments for the existence of God presuppose a God who is indirectly evident and manifest through his works. Therefore they draw conclusions from *ea quae facta sunt* to the invisible being of God. This process of argument is not questionable in itself, but stringent; however, its presupposition, that everything that is corresponds to God and is connected with his being through an *analogia entis*, probably is.<sup>108</sup>

Moltmann rejects the classical cosmological proofs for God's existence not for the process of argument but for its presupposition that "everything that is corresponds to God and is connected with his being through an *analogia entis*".<sup>109</sup> However, protest atheism takes the same presupposition in its argument. Moltmann writes:

Metaphysical atheism, too, takes the world as a mirror of the deity. But in the broken mirror of an unjust and absurd world of triumphant evil and suffering without reason and without end it does not see the countenance of a God, but only the grimace of absurdity and nothingness. Atheism, too, draws a conclusion from the existence of the finite world as it is to its cause and its destiny. But there it finds no good and righteous God, but a capricious demon, a blind destiny, a damning law or an annihilating nothingness.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>108</sup> *CG*, p.210.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.210.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp.219-220.

Such a presupposition, "the reality of the world that can be experienced and known is like a mirror in which God's divinity, God's power, God's wisdom and God's righteousness can indirectly be known",<sup>111</sup> indeed, implies a certain kind of concept of God. If protest atheism does not challenge such a presupposition of theism from the very beginning, it will accept the concept of God which is inherent in theism at the same time.<sup>112</sup>

As Willis, Jr. points out, protest atheism focuses on certain attributes of God that have been maintained by traditional theism, such as omnipotence, goodness, and justice.<sup>113</sup> "However, in its own investigation of the world it does not find the evidence to support belief in this God ... The order of the world is the actual disorder of suffering and injustice."<sup>114</sup> This world is not a cosmos but in larger measure a chaos.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, the existence of an omnipotent, good and just God must be denied.

The God both theism and atheism assume is an infinite God who cannot suffer. Although protest atheism notices the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.210.

<sup>112</sup> Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of the Trinity*, p.83.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.113.

broken order of this world, its acceptance of the method and doctrine of God of traditional theism means it cannot understand God as a suffering God. For protest atheism, the basis of God's inaction in relation to suffering is that God cannot participate in suffering.<sup>116</sup> "God, in his own being, does not experience pain and suffering."<sup>117</sup>

Thereby, Moltmann says: "atheism demonstrates itself to be the brother of theism".<sup>118</sup>

### 3.6 Conclusion

Moltmann, in his *The Crucified God*, on the one hand, opposes the idea that God is known or revealed in the present reality analogically, on the other hand, affirms that God is known or revealed in his opposite in the present reality. The crucial point is that these two different views of God's self-revelation present two different conceptions of God correspondingly.

By analogical reasoning of the present reality of this world, for either theism or protest atheism, God is a God who cannot enter into and participate in the suffering of

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<sup>116</sup> Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of Trinity*, p.83.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> CG, p.221.

this world. This is because analogical reasoning is a process of knowing God by negating the finitude and the finite mode of all perfections of the world and qualifying the perfections transcendently. Its ontological grounding is the metaphysical distinction between God and the world: eternal and temporal, infinite and finite, non-evanescent and evanescent, and the one-sided relationship of God to the world which allows God influencing the world but not vice versa. Consequently, God's presence is the epiphany of the eternal presence which can be grasped merely in pure contemplation but not in the suffering history of the world.

However, in Moltmann's view, God is not revealed analogically but dialectically. God in Christ is present in his opposite but not his likeness. For the sake of this suffering world, God in Christ identifies himself with the world by entering, participating in and suffering with it so that his resurrection becomes the promise for the future of this world. This will be discussed in the next chapter in detail.

## 4 Dialectic in the Christ Event

### 4.1 The Inseparability of the Resurrection and the Cross

#### 4.1.1 The Problem

What is the Christ event? As the event of promise, the Christ event is constituted by the resurrection and cross of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, Moltmann's books of *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God* focus on the resurrection and the cross of Christ respectively. To some of Moltmann's critics, it might seem that Moltmann shifts from one focal point to another without any necessary and internal connection within his own theology or theological development. This view-point is no accident.

On the one hand, in *Theology of Hope* Moltmann makes the well known claim that: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology ... The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set".<sup>2</sup> However, "Moltmann is not concerned primarily with eschatology as such",<sup>3</sup> but with

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<sup>1</sup> TH, p.225.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>3</sup> W.R. Herman, "Moltmann's Christology", *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 17/1 (1989), p.3.

the eschatology which "speaks of Jesus Christ and *his* future".<sup>4</sup> And "Christ has a future because of his resurrection".<sup>5</sup> Christian eschatology "recognizes the reality of the raising of Jesus and proclaims the future of the risen Lord".<sup>6</sup> Hence the eschatological significance of Jesus Christ's resurrection is the focal point of Moltmann's first major book, *Theology of Hope*.

On the other hand, in his second major book, *The Crucified God*, Moltmann claims: "*Theologia crucis* is not a single chapter in theology, but the key signature for all Christian theology. It is the point from which all theological statements which seek to be Christian are viewed."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the book is subtitled "The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology".<sup>8</sup> The "cross is the test of everything which

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<sup>4</sup> TH, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> CG, p.301. Moltmann cites these words from W. von Loewenich's book on Luther's theology: "For Luther the cross is not only the subject of theology; it is the distinctive mark of all theology ... The theology of the cross is not a chapter in theology but a specific kind of theology ... it is the centre that provides perspective for all theological statements." [*Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. H.J.A. Bouman (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976), pp.17-18.]

<sup>8</sup> A.E. McGrath suggests that *Kritik* should be translated as Criterion, rather than Criticism. [*The Making of Modern German Christology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.203-204, n.5.]



deserves to be called Christian".<sup>9</sup> Once again, Moltmann understands the whole theology in another focal point, the cross of Christ. Therefore, according to Moltmann, "a widespread accusation made against *The Crucified God* is the same as that made against *Theology of Hope*".<sup>10</sup> It is charged with one-sidedness. According to B. Mondin, the book stresses "arbitrarily only a singly mystery of Christ, the mystery of the cross".<sup>11</sup> According to J.M. Lochman, the "God of Christian faith is not just the crucified God."<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Two Sides of One Coin

It seems to these critics that these two books are separated from each other and lacking any logical and doctrinal connection for their one-sidedness. In this way, Moltmann is supposed to neglect the unity of the crucifixion and the resurrection in the Christ event. However, R. Bauckham points out that the view-point which by *The Crucified God* Moltmann makes a fresh start in his theology is superficial.<sup>13</sup> It is certain that Moltmann does

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<sup>9</sup> CG, p.7.

<sup>10</sup> HTG, p.173.

<sup>11</sup> B. Mondin, "Der gekreuzigte Gott" in DGG, p.106. Translation is cited from HTG, p.173.

<sup>12</sup> J. M. Lochman, "Gottes Sein ist im Leiden: Zur trinitarischen Kreuzestheologie Jürgen Moltmanns" in DGG, p.33. Translation is cited from HTG, p.173.

<sup>13</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.53.

explore theology with different unifying themes in his trilogy. But this does not imply that there is not any inner doctrinal connection between these two books.

To put it simply, the two themes of the resurrection and the crucifixion can be seen as the two sides of one coin. Ontically, the "event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus" is "one event and one person".<sup>14</sup> Jesus Christ's identity is said to be understood as an identity in cross and resurrection.<sup>15</sup> "The risen Christ is the historical and crucified Jesus, and vice versa."<sup>16</sup> Noetically, the "resurrection 'does not evacuate the cross' (I Cor. I.17), but fills it with eschatology and saving significance."<sup>17</sup> "Only in the light of his resurrection from the dead does his death gain that special, unique saving significance which it cannot achieve otherwise, even in the light of the life he lived."<sup>18</sup> The resurrection shows the meaning of the cross.<sup>19</sup> In this vein, as Moltmann claims, Christian theology must be an *eschatologia crucis*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CG, p.204.

<sup>15</sup> TH, p.200.

<sup>16</sup> CG, p.160.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.182.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid,

<sup>19</sup> TH, p.200.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.83, 160. Cf. CG, p.5

For Moltmann, "the resurrection can neither be reduced to the cross ... nor can the cross be reduced to the resurrection".<sup>21</sup> Likewise, *Theology of Hope* can neither be replaced by *The Crucified God*, nor can *The Crucified God* be replaced by *Theology of Hope*. However, he considers that "theology of hope is at its hard core theology of cross"<sup>22</sup>, lying "in the resurrection of the crucified Christ",<sup>23</sup> while "the theology of cross is none other than the reverse side of the Christian theology of hope",<sup>24</sup> giving it "a more profound dimension".<sup>25</sup> Therefore, "these two different approaches to the whole of Christian theology are not in competition, but complementary aspects of Moltmann's theological enterprise".<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, in the Christ event, for Moltmann, the resurrection and the crucifixion are not two isolated happenings, but *the resurrection of the crucified Christ and the cross of the risen Christ*<sup>27</sup> respectively.

Obviously, the cross and the resurrection are mutually presupposed and implied in Moltmann's theology. In the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.200.

<sup>22</sup> EH, p.57.

<sup>23</sup> CG, p.5

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.54.

<sup>27</sup> CG, p.204.

following the Christ event will be analyzed in terms of God's self-negation, identification with the godless and sublation of God's self-negation.

#### 4.2 Revelation in the Opposite and God's Self-Negation

The Christ event is an event of double negations. The cross is the first negation whereas the resurrection is the second negation. In other words, the Christ event is dialectically structured. This does not merely denote that the cross is negated by the resurrection but also expresses that God is negated by himself initially.

##### 4.2.1 The Way of Understanding Revelation in the Opposite

According to Moltmann, "the deity of God is revealed in the paradox of the cross".<sup>28</sup> For him, the cross embodies the dialectical principle of knowledge, like is known by unlike, which contrasts with the analogical principle of knowledge, like is known by like.<sup>29</sup> He takes Hippocrates' and Schelling's words as illustrations of this epistemological principle and concludes that "God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite".<sup>30</sup> It is true that the crucial concept of "revelation in the opposite" in

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.27.

Moltmann's theology of cross is not explicated clearly. And this causes some confusion and puzzlement.<sup>31</sup> R. Bauckham questions that "if it means literally that God is revealed by what is opposite to him then it is hard to see either how a revelation of God could be recognised or how anything of God would be revealed".<sup>32</sup> However, this does not mean that Moltmann does not provide any clue to understand this concept properly.

In the first place, it is very easy to be misdirected by Moltmann's quotations from Hippocrates and Schelling in understanding this concept. One will try to grasp it in terms of Hippocrates' "*contraria contrariis curantur*" or Schelling's words: "Every being can be revealed only in its opposite. Love only in hatred, unity only in conflict."<sup>33</sup> These quotations have their proper meaning only in the context of their different thoughts. Although they are the same in the formal sense of revelation in the opposite, they are applied in different contexts so as to have different concrete meanings. Likewise, Moltmann's concept of dialectical principle of knowledge shares the form but with different application.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.68. Cf. DGG, pp.47-48, 143-144, 152, 158, 188-189.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> CG, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Bauckham considers that "it was probably a mistake for Moltmann to try to put the cross under some *general* dialectical principle of knowledge". (*Moltmann: Messianic*

The concept of "revelation in the opposite" has to be understood as a formal concept firstly. It can be expressed in this way: A is revealed in its opposite, -A. However, this formal concept does not tell what the ontical relationship of A to -A is. In Moltmann's case, A and -A are identical. This is because -A is A's self-negation.

One should not neglect that Moltmann applies this concept to understand the cross. Indeed, it is his interpretation of the cross that can help to clarify how he uses this concept in turn.

#### 4.2.2 Luther's Theology of the Cross

Moltmann admits that his interpretation of the death of Christ on the cross follows Luther's *theologia crucis*.<sup>35</sup> His two principles of knowledge, analogical and dialectical, "correspond to Luther's distinction between the theology of glory which knows God from his works and the theology of the cross which knows him in his suffering" respectively.<sup>36</sup> Then a prior understanding of Luther's theology of cross will be helpful to clarify Moltmann's concept of revelation.

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*Theology in the Making*, p.69.)

<sup>35</sup> HTG, p.172.

<sup>36</sup> R. Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30/4(1977), p.305. Cf. CG, pp.27-28, 68-71, 196, 208-214.

"The most comprehensive description of Luther's *theologia crucis* is given in his theses in The *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), where he contrasts the theology of the cross with the theology of glory".<sup>37</sup> And the decisive statements are in theses 19 and 20.<sup>38</sup> These two types of knowledge of God are fundamentally opposed to each other. Indeed, what Luther calls the theology of glory is the view of mediaeval Scholasticism which maintains that the knowledge of God can be grasped through knowing God's creation analogically. According to Moltmann, its underlying epistemological principle is analogical rather than dialectical. Moltmann's criticism of Aquinas' natural theology precisely inherits Luther's merit of opposing the theology of glory. However, he further uncovers the epistemological principles inherent in these opposite theologies. That is, he distinguishes these two by contrasting their different epistemological character.

For Luther, a theologian of glory, who does not deserve to be called a theologian, "looks upon the invisible things of God as they are perceived in created things".<sup>39</sup> By tracing the footprints of God in creation, this way of

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<sup>37</sup> W.D. Persaud, "Luther's *Theologia Crucis*: A Theology of 'Radical Reversal' in Response to the Challenge of Marx's *Weltanschauung*", *Dialog* 29/4 (1990), p.264.

<sup>38</sup> Von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.18.

<sup>39</sup> M. Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation" in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. T.F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), thesis 19, p.43. Here the translation is cited from A.E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p.148.

knowing God is the nearest path.<sup>40</sup> "The invisible things of God are virtue, godliness, wisdom, justice, goodness, and so forth."<sup>41</sup> The implication of this type of knowledge of God is drawn out by W. von Loewenich by substituting modern concepts of nature, history, and personality for "the things that are made".<sup>42</sup> "Whether one becomes aware of God's glory by contemplating the eternal laws of nature or by quiet prayer and adoration in view of the inexhaustible riches of creaturely life; whether one sees history as the Eternal's unconcealed revelation, or whether because of the mystery of personality one is convinced of the certainty of the Uncaused, in every case the attempt is made to reach the knowledge of God by way of creation."<sup>43</sup> However, Luther claims that "the recognition of all these things does not make one worthy or wise".<sup>44</sup>

What Luther means here is that "the knowledge of God which the theologian of glory offers through his study of 'the invisible things of God' is not salvific."<sup>45</sup> Such a "'divine one' stand so far above humankind that God is de

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<sup>40</sup> Von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.18.

<sup>41</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", explanation of thesis 19, p.43.

<sup>42</sup> Von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.18.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", explanation of thesis 19, p.43.

<sup>45</sup> Persaud, "Luther's *Theologia Crucis*: A Theology of 'Radical Reversal' in Response to the Challenge of Marx's *Weltanschauung*", p.267.



*facto* absent from the world of human suffering".<sup>46</sup> W.D. Persaud is right that "the emphasis in Luther's theology is knowledge of God that is saving knowledge".<sup>47</sup> For Luther, such knowledge is to be found in God's self-revelation through Christ and his cross.

In thesis 20 of the *Heidelberg Disputation* Luther says: "The man who preceives the visible rearward parts of God as seen in suffering and the cross does, however, deserve to be called a theologian."<sup>48</sup> J. Pelikan says to the point:<sup>49</sup> "At the basis of the theology of Cross was the proposition that 'God can be found only in suffering and the cross',<sup>50</sup> so that 'he who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering'".<sup>51</sup> But what are the visible things that are seen through the cross? The visible things of God which are in opposition to the invisible, to Luther, are "his human nature, weakness, foolishness".<sup>52</sup> There is "nothing else to be seen than disgrace, poverty, death, and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", thesis 20, p.43. Here the translation is cited from McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.148.

<sup>49</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* vol 4: *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp.155-156.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation", explanation of thesis 21, p.44.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., explanation of thesis 20, p.43.

everything that is shown us in the suffering Christ".<sup>53</sup> Precisely in the things humanity regards as the counterpart of the divine, God has become visible. God wants to reveal himself in the humility and shame of the cross.

Moltmann summarizes Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* as follows: "God reveals himself to the godless not through power and glory, but on the contrary in suffering and the cross, and in this way justifies the sinners."<sup>54</sup> Suffering and cross is the contradiction of power and glory. For Luther, the God who is suffering on the cross is the God of power and glory. However, God conceals his glory and power so as to be a hidden God who can only be recognized "in the humility and shame of the cross",<sup>55</sup> "under the opposite form".<sup>56</sup> Christ on the cross, for Luther, "was forsaken by all, even by God".<sup>57</sup> In the godforsaken Christ, God reveals himself in his opposite. Therefore, G. Ebeling says that "the principle of the knowledge of God in the cross is that of contradiction".<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Weimar Edition of Luther's Works, vol.5, p.108. Cited from von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of Cross*, p.28.

<sup>54</sup> HTG, p.172.

<sup>55</sup> Von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.29.

<sup>56</sup> American Edition of Luther's Works, vol.25, p.366. Cited from von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p.29.

<sup>57</sup> M. Luther, "A Mediation on Christ's Passion", in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writing*, ed. T.F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), p.169.

<sup>58</sup> G. Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought*, trans. R.A. Wilson (London: Collins, 1972), p.228.

#### 4.2.3 The Cross as God's Self-Negation

Moltmann writes something similar to Luther's revelation under the opposite form when he talks about the application of the dialectical principle of knowledge:

Applied to Christian theology, this means that God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite: godlessness and abandonment by God. In concrete terms, God is revealed in the cross of Christ who was abandoned by God.<sup>59</sup>

Speaking formally, God's opposite is godlessness. Then, God is revealed in godlessness. And for Moltmann, as God's opposite, the godlessness and godforsakenness primarily denotes the godforsaken Christ. This godlessness is equal to the crucified Christ. The Christ who is on the cross is the godforsaken Christ. Therefore, the cross signifies the opposite of God. However, Christ is not something other than God but God the Son. He is abandoned by God the Father. The act of abandoning unto godlessness which contradicts God's being is an act of negation. In the cross, God abandons God. God becomes his opposite by his self-negation because he is abandoned by God himself. And this is precisely the paradox of the cross: God against God.<sup>60</sup> It is an event happening within God himself.<sup>61</sup> In this way, God's self-revelation in his opposite is to be understood as an act of God's self-negation.

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<sup>59</sup> *CG*, p.27. Cf. *FC*, pp.78-79.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

This view is further supported by Moltmann's view of Christ's resurrection. In the context of discussing the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he says that "his resurrection must then be understood ... as a conquest of the deadliness of death - as a conquest of god-forsakenness ... as a negation of the negative (Hegel), as a negation of the negation of God".<sup>62</sup> It is clear that the death of Christ which is negated by his resurrection is the negation of God. In another context of talking of the risen Christ as the God of promise, as the coming God, Moltmann puts these phrases in parallel: the "death of God" on the cross, the pain of the negation of himself; the resurrection of the crucified one, the negation of negation.<sup>63</sup> Obviously, for him, while the resurrection of Christ is the negation of his death, the cross of Christ is the negation of God's own being, an absolute *nihil* embracing God.<sup>64</sup>

In this vein, God's self-revelation in his opposite is his own act of self-negation. But one cannot comprehend the cross event by using the simple concept of God (*esse simplex*).<sup>65</sup> Moltmann points out the problem:

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<sup>62</sup> TH, p.211.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.171.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.198.

<sup>65</sup> CG, p.244.

In that case one would have to say: what happened on the cross was an event between God and God. It was a deep division in God himself, in so far as God abandoned God and contradicted himself, and at the same time a unity in God, in so far as God was at one with God and corresponded to himself. In that case one would have to put the formula in a paradoxical way: God died the death of the godless on the cross, and yet did not die. God is dead and yet is not dead.<sup>66</sup>

However, Moltmann does not avoid this contradiction by understanding God's self-negation in terms of the dialectical movement of the absolute, identical subject but by taking it as an event in the Trinity, that is, a trinitarian event between the Son and the Father.<sup>67</sup>

In German Idealism, especially G.W.F. Hegel, the divine *monas* is interpreted as the absolute, identical subject.<sup>68</sup> For Hegel, God as the Trinity does not mean that there are three "persons" in God as represented by traditional Church dogma.<sup>69</sup> "The name 'Father', 'Son', and 'Spirit' are figurative, childlike ways of expressing the three moments constitutive of the interior dialectic of the divine life - unity, differentiation, return; or universality, particularity, and individuality."<sup>70</sup> In other words, there is only one person in God whose divine life is dialectic.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.245.

<sup>68</sup> TKG, p.139.

<sup>69</sup> P.C. Hodgson, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel" in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* vol.1, ed. N. Smart, J. Clayton, S. Katz and P. Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.101.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

The death of Christ is but the climax of the differentiation of God's life.

Moltmann assures that there are three persons in God and views "what happened on the cross ... as an event between God and the Son of God".<sup>71</sup> From this perspective two negations happen when Jesus Christ is crucified.

J.J O'Donnell noted that "the central concept which Moltmann employs to interpret the event of the cross is the biblical idea *paradidonai*, in German *Dahingabe*, in English 'deliver up'".<sup>72</sup> Moltmann identifies a double *paradidonai* in the event of the cross:<sup>73</sup> the Father "delivers up" his Son to the fate of death; the Son "delivers himself up" for sinful humanity.<sup>74</sup> The Father abandons his Son and the Son abandons himself. Moltmann explains the full import of the Father's action by citing the study of W. Popkes on the meaning of *paradidonai* in the New Testament:

That God delivers up his Son is one of the most unheard-of statements in the New Testament. We must understand "deliver up" in its full sense and not water it down to mean "send" or "give". What happened here is what Abraham did not need to do to Isaac (cf. Rom. 8:32): Christ was quite deliberately abandoned by

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<sup>71</sup> CG, p.192.

<sup>72</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.117. Cf. McGrath, *The Making of Modern Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg*, p.189.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> CG, pp.242-244. Cf. TKG, pp.80-83; WJC, pp.172-177.

the Father to the fate of death: God subjected him to the power of corruption, whether this be called man or death. To express the idea in its most acute form, one might say in the words of the dogma of the early church: the first person of the Trinity casts out and annihilates the second ... A theology of the cross cannot be expressed more radically than it is here.<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, Moltmann gives an analysis of the corresponding *paradidonai* of the Son:

In Gal. 2:20 the "delivering up" formula also occurs with Christ as its subject: "... the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself to me". According to this it is not just the Father who delivers Jesus up to die godforsaken on the cross, but the Son who gives himself up. This corresponds to the synoptic account of the passion story according to which Jesus consciously and willingly walked the way of the cross and was not overtaken by death as by an evil, unfortunate fate. It is theologically important to note that the formula in Paul occurs with both the Father and the Son as subject, since it expresses a deep conformity between the will of the Father and the will of the Son in the event of the cross, as the Gethsemane narrative also records.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore in the trinitarian context this double "delivering up" in the cross can be understood as: the Father negates the Son and the Son negates himself. They both share the same will to annihilate and cast out the second person in the Trinity. This is precisely the meaning of the statement that the crucifixion is an event "which

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<sup>75</sup> W. Popkes, *Christus Traditus: Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament*, 1967, p.286f. Cited from CG, p.241.

<sup>76</sup> CG, p.243.

takes place within God himself",<sup>77</sup> "between God and God".<sup>78</sup> It is in this twofold negation that God reveals himself.

The dialectical principle of knowledge, like is known by unlike, then, can be understood as: God is revealed in his self-negation. Like becomes unlike so that God can be recognized by the sinners and the unrighteous. In his self-negation God identifies himself with the godforsaken so that he can be recognized by them. "If like is known only by like, then the Son of God would have had to remain in heaven, because he would be unrecognizable by anything earthly."<sup>79</sup> Therefore, "it is the dialectical knowledge of God in his opposite which first brings heaven down to the earth of those who are abandoned by God".<sup>80</sup>

At the same time, on the cross God's humiliation is completely revealed. God's incarnation "even unto death" is his utter humiliation.<sup>81</sup> For Moltmann, the confession "*Ecce deus!*" means "Behold God on the cross!"<sup>82</sup> When the crucified Jesus on the cross is called the "image of the invisible God", the meaning is that "*this* is God, and God

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.152.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.151.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.205.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



is like *this*".<sup>83</sup> On the cross God is revealed as the one who empties himself and identifies himself with the godless and the godforsaken, becoming "the brother of the despised, abandoned and oppressed".<sup>84</sup> By this way, the love of God reaches them.<sup>85</sup> In other words, God's love is revealed when the son of God abandons his divine identity and enters the situation of the godless, the context of the godforsaken. It is at this point that one can say: "The cross therefore reveals God in his loving identification with godforsaken men and women."<sup>86</sup>

Here one point should be noticed. God's act of self-negation in Christ's death is for the sake of the godless. Through this God identifies himself with this suffering world. It is not an act purely for God himself. That is, for Moltmann, God's self-negation is not a self-differentiation in the divine life in Hegelian sense that the Father as the unity negates himself to be the Son and returns to himself in the Spirit.

#### 4.3 God's Identification with this World in the Cross

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>85</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.69.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.3.1 From Historical Good Friday to Speculative Good Friday

Illuminated by Hegel's philosophical interpretation of Good Friday, Moltmann, in his *Theology of Hope*, connects the godforsakenness of Jesus on the cross and the godforsakenness of the world.<sup>87</sup> From the very beginning he notes the universal significance of the "death of God" in the context of discussing the reality of the resurrection of Christ. He considers the question of the reality of the resurrection of Christ can only be one "which embraces the whole modern experience of the world, of self and of the future - a question which we ourselves constitute with our whole reality".<sup>88</sup> And the statement of Hegel and Nietzsche: "God is dead", in Moltmann's view, "is not merely a statement of philosophical metaphysics or of theology, but is one which also seems to lie at the foundations of modern experience of self and the world ...".<sup>89</sup> "God is dead" implies that this world is experienced as godless, humanity's self is godless, the future is godless. Godlessness is the modern experience of the whole reality.

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<sup>87</sup> TH, pp. 168-172.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

In 1802, Hegel ended his essay *Faith and Knowledge* with his own interpretation of Good Friday.<sup>90</sup> Moltmann quotes this passage with his own commentary to establish the point that there is a connection between the godforsakenness of the crucified Jesus and the godforsakenness of the world.

As shown in the title of the essay: *Faith and Knowledge or the Philosophy of Subjectivity in the Complete Range of its Forms as Kantian, Jacobian, and Fichtean Philosophy*,<sup>91</sup> the main concern of Hegel is the problem raised from the reflective philosophy. In general, reality, in such philosophy, is split up into two opposite realms: the infinite and the finite. God and the world are separated from each other. The gap posited between them is infinite. In this way, the whole finite reality is suffering from being forsaken by the infinite. They can never be reconciled with one another. G. Rosen paraphrases that passage:

The abstract, pure concept or infinity in Kant and Fichte is "the abyss of nothingness in which all being is engulfed". The infinite is opposed to being, that is, to the finite, to all determination, and hence is nothing itself ("nothingness"). This nothingness is imposed on all being ("the abyss ... in which all being is engulfed"). This "signifies" the "infinite grief" of the finite: the individual feels abandoned

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<sup>90</sup> G.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. W. Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p.190.

<sup>91</sup> The German Title: *Glauben und Wissen oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjectivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen, als Kantische, Jacobische, und Fichtesche Philosophie*.

by a<sup>92</sup> characterless, omnipotent and hence impotent God.

However, Hegel does not agree with this philosophical viewpoint. He considers that the bifurcation is not fixed but a moment of the dialectical movement of the Absolute Spirit or God. "Spirit, as infinite creative life ... posits a world which in its determinateness ... is the negation of its own infinite indeterminateness. Then, in a negation of that negation, Spirit overcomes the estrangement in a higher synthetic unification."<sup>93</sup> With this understanding, "Hegel draws a parallel between Jesus' godforsakenness on Golgotha ... and the modern, worldwide godforsakenness and godlessness, which is, in fact, a universal Good Friday, an 'abyss of nothingness which engulfs all being', an 'infinite pain'".<sup>94</sup> According to Hegel, Good Friday has to be interpreted "as the negative moment which is necessarily produced by the Absolute Spirit (God) in order to allow its externalization and to make itself finite so that it might return to itself in an enriched and concretized way".<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> G. Rosen, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone, 1981), pp.103-104.

<sup>93</sup> W.J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1982), pp.150-151.

<sup>94</sup> M. Steen, "Jürgen Moltmann's Critical Reception of K. Barth's Theopaschitism", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 67/4 (1991), pp.294-295.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.295.

Therefore, Moltmann comments that "Hegel meant by this that modern atheism and nihilism ... can be understood as a universalizing of the historic Good Friday of the forsakenness of Jesus, so that it becomes a speculative Good Friday of the forsakenness of all that is".<sup>96</sup> That is, Good Friday denotes not merely the death of God but also the death of this world, not merely the godforsakenness of the crucified Jesus but also the godforsakenness of the world. The crucified Jesus and this world suffer from the same alienation which splits them from God. Moltmann agrees with Hegel that the "infinite pain of the cross" has to be understood in terms of universality. However, he rejects Hegel's method of universalization by projecting the cross as an "element belonging to the divine process and thus immanent in God".<sup>97</sup> Otherwise, the historicity of the event of the cross and the resurrection will be done away with in the logos of reflection and consciousness.<sup>98</sup> And such a speculative christology "makes the particular features of the real historical human being Jesus of Nazareth and the arbitrary occurrences of his life unessential".<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.3.2 The Cross as God's Identification with the World

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<sup>96</sup> TH, p.169.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.171.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.172.

<sup>99</sup> CG, p.91.

In *Theology of Hope* Moltmann does not explicate how the crucified Jesus is connected to the godforsaken world. Rather, he is concerned with the abolition of the universal Good Friday, of the godforsakenness of the world, in the resurrection. As M. Steen says: "Moltmann seeks to understand the godforsakenness of the world, the destructive, the prevailing nothingness, as taken up in God's dialectic, eschatological process, in accordance with the dialectic event of the crucified and resurrected Christ".<sup>100</sup> In this vein, Moltmann writes that "the resurrection and the future of God must manifest themselves not only in the case of the godforsakenness of the crucified Jesus, but also in that of the godforsakenness of the world".<sup>101</sup>

Even so, Moltmann implicitly expresses the point that the connection between the historic Good Friday and the universal Good Friday is not external but internal. This is because only such connection will make the abolition of the negative possible in the resurrection of Christ. This point is very clear when Moltmann says: "If 'atheism' finds its radical form in the recognition of the universal significance of Good Friday, then it is a fact that the God

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<sup>100</sup> Steen, "Jürgen Moltmann's Critical Reception of K. Barth's Theopaschitism", p.295.

<sup>101</sup> TH, p.169.

of the resurrection is in some sort an 'a-theistic' God".<sup>102</sup>

It is in *The Crucified God* that Moltmann explicitly interprets the cross as the place God identifies himself with the godforsaken world. In his view, the cross is the place on which the incarnation of the Logos is completed.<sup>103</sup> He writes: "When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of man, but in his death on the cross also enters into the situation of man's godforsakenness".<sup>104</sup> "Not only does he enter into it, descend into it, but he also accepts it and embraces the whole of human existence with his being,"<sup>105</sup> "making it part of his own eternal life".<sup>106</sup> It seems that God's act of identifying with the world on the cross consists of two moments: God enters into the situation of the godforsakenness of the world and the negative element of the world enters into the being of God. In this way the destiny of Jesus Christ and that of this world are interwoven with one another.

In other words, God the Son, like all living things, takes up death in his own being so that he is completely in

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.171.

<sup>103</sup> CG, p.204. Cf. TKG, pp.118-119.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.276. Cf. TKG, p.119.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Cf. TKG, p.119.

<sup>106</sup> TKG, p.119.

solidarity with the godforsakenness. Therefore, Moltmann writes: "God becomes the God who identifies himself with men and women to the point of death, and beyond".<sup>107</sup> And this is the significance of the completion of God's incarnation on the cross.

God expresses his solidarity with this world on the cross. Here one thing has to be clarified. Is Jesus Christ totally dead on the cross? Or just his human nature is crucified but not his divine nature? Indeed these questions arise only in the framework of traditional christological doctrine of two natures. The significance of these questions is how radically God identifies himself with the godforsaken world.

#### 4.3.3 The Death of the Son and Death *in* God

The christological doctrine of two natures proposes that "it was only the human nature in Christ which died".<sup>108</sup> In this way, "the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ provided a basis for explaining Christ's death without directly involving God".<sup>109</sup> Moltmann

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<sup>107</sup> TKG, p.119. In *WJC* Moltmann writes that "Jesus died the death of all living things ... He died in solidarity with the whole sighing creation, human and non-human - the creation that 'sighs' because it is subject of transience".(p.169)

<sup>108</sup> R.D. Zimany, "Moltmann's Crucified God", *Dialog* 16/1 (1977), p.52.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



discloses the concept of God and the longing for salvation underlying this doctrine:<sup>110</sup> "The theistic concept of God according to which God cannot die, and the hope for salvation, according to which man is to be immortal, made it impossible to regard Jesus as really being God and at the same time as being forsaken by God".<sup>111</sup> "Therefore the God-man Christ can only have suffered 'according to the flesh' and 'in the flesh', that is in his human nature",<sup>112</sup> not his divine nature.

Although Scholastic theology can attribute the human characteristics of suffering and death to the whole person of Christ with the help of the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, one still cannot say: Therefore the divine nature can suffer and die; it is only possible to say: Therefore the person of Christ is mortal.<sup>113</sup> This is because the predicates of the human nature are only transferred to the divine nature.<sup>114</sup> The divine nature does not suffer and die in its own. God's being is not really

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<sup>110</sup> CG, pp.227-228.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.228.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.232.

<sup>114</sup> According to Moltmann, Luther tries to interpret the death of Christ as the death of God within the framework of the doctrine of two natures after Scholastic theology. However, owing to the lacking of trinitarian terms, he arrives at paradoxical distinctions between God and God: "between the God who crucified and the crucified God; the God who is dead and yet is not dead". (CG, pp.232-235)

forsaken and his identification of himself with the forsaken world will be not radical enough.

According to Moltmann, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is not a divine-human event, but a trinitarian event between the Son and the Father.<sup>115</sup> "The title 'Son' does not ... concern a Godhead separated from the manhood of Christ, but the whole person of the Christ who is delivered up ... in his relationship to the Father."<sup>116</sup> Therefore it is God the Son who dies on the cross but not his human nature. God identifies himself with this suffering world in God the Son rather than in the human nature of Jesus Christ. It is only in this way that the negative element of this world is taken up in God's own being.

It is God the Son whose whole being dies on the cross. Then, to God, what is it meant by death? In trinitarian terms, the Son is forsaken by the Father. His death is "the death of complete abandonment by God"<sup>117</sup> "Jesus died 'without God' - godlessly."<sup>118</sup> He "suffers dying in forsakenness".<sup>119</sup> God the Son is delivered up in the absolute, total *nihil*,<sup>120</sup> "the absolute death, the

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<sup>115</sup> *CG*, p.245.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.276.

<sup>118</sup> *TKG*, p.82. Cf. *WJC*, p.174.

<sup>119</sup> *CG*, p.243.

<sup>120</sup> *TH*, p.198.

destroying nothingness itself".<sup>121</sup> Death, then, is the condition of being nothing. The Son on the cross become nothing so that his resurrection is "a new totality which annihilates the total *nihil*".<sup>122</sup>

With this understanding of the death of Jesus, Moltmann distinguishes the suffering of the Son from that of the Father: "The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son";<sup>123</sup> for one "can no longer 'suffer' death, because suffering presupposes life".<sup>124</sup> The Father and the Son do not suffer in the same way. By this Moltmann avoids the ancient heresy patripassianism which holds that God the Father suffers as the Son. On the other hand he claims that "nor can the death of Jesus be understood in theopaschite terms as the 'death of God'".<sup>125</sup> "but only as death *in* God".<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *FC*, p.75. In *GC* Moltmann says: "... by yielding up the Son to death in God-forsakenness on the cross, and by surrendering him to hell, the eternal God enters the Nothingness out of which he created the world ... It is the presence of his self-humiliating, suffering love for his creation, in which he experiences death itself." (p.91)

<sup>122</sup> *TH*, p.198.

<sup>123</sup> *CG*, p.243.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*. Cf. *CG*, p.207; *FC*, p.73.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207. P.S. Fiddes notes that in *TKG* Moltmann speaks simply of "the death of God". [*The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p.195.]

Moltmann insists that "it is important to distinguish the divine nature *in genere* and the second person of the Trinity *in concreto*"<sup>127</sup> when one is talking of the Christ event. The reason is simple. The one who dies on the cross is the Son but not the Father and the Spirit. Since God *in genere* refers to the triune God, it is inappropriate to say that God is dead.

#### 4.4 God's Sublation of His Self-Negation in the Resurrection

In *The Crucified God* Moltmann writes:

... a trinitarian theology of the cross perceives God in the negative element and therefore the negative element in God, and in this dialectical way is panentheistic. For in the hidden mode of humiliation to the point of the cross, all being and all that annihilates has already been taken up in God and God begins to become "all in all".<sup>128</sup>

The strong Hegelian overtones of this passage are not unusual in Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, particularly the statement that the contradictory elements have been "taken up in God".<sup>129</sup> "Being taken up" is the English translation of the German passive verb *aufgehoben*. Its noun *Aufhebung*

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.235.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.277.

<sup>129</sup> For example: "He humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken ... "(CG, p.276)

is often translated as "sublation" or "sublimation" in Hegelian sense, "in the sense of resolving a dialectical tension"<sup>130</sup>. A.E. McGrath suggests that "it is possible that Moltmann may wish to convey the idea of the resolution of the seeming irresolvable dialectic between 'being' and 'non-being' in the resurrection of the one who was crucified".<sup>131</sup>

#### 4.4.1 The Resurrection as the Negation of Negation

In *Theology of Hope* Moltmann explicitly interprets the resurrection of Christ as "the negation of the negative" (*Negation des Negativen*), as "a negation of the negation of God" (*als Negation der Negation Gottes*), as "the beginning of and the source of the abolition of the universal Good Friday" (*der Anfang und der Ursprung der Aufhebung des universalen Karfreitags*), of the godforsakenness of the world.<sup>132</sup>

Here two points should be noted. The first one is that Moltmann uses Hegelian term "negation of negation" to interpret the resurrection. Basically this is consistent with the analysis of the cross above as God's self-negation in Jesus Christ. In Hegelian sense, if the cross is

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<sup>130</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg*, p.191.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp.191-192.

<sup>132</sup> TH, p.211.

understood as God's self-negation, then it is very natural to interpret the resurrection as the negation of the negation; and vice versa.

The second one is that Moltmann employs the Hegelian term *Aufhebung* to express Christ's resurrection as the beginning and the source of the abolition of the godforsakenness of this world. Since on the cross Christ identifies himself with this world, his destiny is interwoven with the destiny of this world. Therefore, the negation of the death of Jesus Christ is to be interpreted as the beginning of the negation of this godforsaken world.

In sum, the resurrection is understood as "negation of negation" and *Aufhebung* (sublation) in relation to the death of Jesus and the death of this world respectively. Jesus Christ's resurrection is not merely an act of God's negating the negative element which he accepted and adopted as part of his being on the cross, but also an act of negating the godforsakenness of this world.

According to Hegel, negation of negation is the sublating of the contradiction of the first negation.<sup>133</sup> This means that the second negation is a kind of sublation and its function is to sublimate the contradiction in the

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<sup>133</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), p.835.

first negation. Then, what is it meant by the statement that the contradiction is sublated in the second negation?

#### 4.4.2 The Negation of Negation as the Sublation of the Crucified Jesus Christ

*Aufheben* has three main senses: (1) to raise, to hold, to lift up; (2) to annul, abolish, destroy, cancel, suspend; (3) to keep, save, preserve.<sup>134</sup> The noun *Aufhebung* similarly means (1) raising up; (2) abolition; and (3) preserving.<sup>135</sup> "When something is sublated [*aufgehoben(e)*], it is ... a moment of a whole that also contains its opposite."<sup>136</sup> "What results from the sublation of something, e.g. the whole in which both it and its opposite survive as moments, is invariably higher than ... the item(s) sublated."<sup>137</sup> Through this moment the identity of the thing being sublated arrives, for Hegel, at the identity of identity and non-identity. The opposite is contained in a higher level of synthesis.

In Moltmann's case, what is going to be sublated? Obviously, it is the crucified Jesus. However, Moltmann uses the terms negation of negation and sublation (or

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<sup>134</sup> M. Inwood, "Sublate" in *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.283.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.284.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

taking up) usually in the sense of abolition of death, negative element. It is only when he talks of the identity of Jesus that the meaning of preserving in God's act of resurrecting emerges.

The identity of the risen Christ is not a simple one. He is not a God in heaven but the one whose identity is an identity in contradiction.<sup>138</sup> Moltmann considers that the contradictions between the cross and the resurrection are an inherent part of Jesus' identity.<sup>139</sup> Jesus' identity is a dialectical identity which exists only through the contradiction.<sup>140</sup> Jesus, then, cannot be recognized by either his death or his resurrection but by both. Jesus as the crucified cannot be reduced to the risen one and vice versa.<sup>141</sup>

How can the identity in contradiction be possible? How can the contradiction or opposite be contained in Jesus' identity? The crucial point is that resurrecting is an act of God subsuming the death of Jesus Christ.

In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann argues that Jesus' resurrection cannot be viewed as a revivification or as

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<sup>138</sup> TH, p.200.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. TH, 200.



life after death.<sup>142</sup> This is because "such interpretations do not take seriously enough the deadliness of death".<sup>143</sup> For Moltmann, resurrection means "life from the dead", the annihilation of the power of death in the victory of the new, eternal life.<sup>144</sup> "Resurrection from the dead" does not deny the fatality of death.<sup>145</sup> This point echoes Moltmann's interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection in *Theology of Hope*: He is wholly dead and wholly raised.<sup>146</sup>

In this vein, death means discontinuity of life, absolute *nihil*. However, by raising Jesus to life, God created continuity in this radical discontinuity.<sup>147</sup> By raising Jesus from the dead, God creates life and new being out of nothing.<sup>148</sup> At this point Moltmann makes clear that the risen Jesus is not "a new heaven Being of some kind, but Jesus himself".<sup>149</sup> This means that the risen Jesus is the crucified Jesus himself. Then, the act of resurrecting functions in two ways. Firstly, it abolishes the power of death in the crucified Jesus. God the Son is not overcome

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<sup>142</sup> CG, pp.169-170. Cf. TH, p.211.

<sup>143</sup> Herman, "Moltmann's Christology", p.14. Cf. TKG, pp.85-86.

<sup>144</sup> CG, p.170.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> TH, p.200.

<sup>147</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.203.

<sup>148</sup> TH, p.200.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.199.

by death so as to become nothing forever. Secondly, it preserves the identity of the crucified Jesus in the risen Jesus. This is to say that resurrection does not annihilate the crucified Jesus but the death of Jesus. Jesus' identity, then, is an identity of continuity in radical discontinuity, or an identity of identity in total contradiction.<sup>150</sup> The crucified Jesus is preserved in a higher identity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is simultaneously the crucified and the risen one. It "is the *same* Jesus who was crucified and is now raised";<sup>151</sup> it is the *same* Jesus who is now raised was crucified.

#### 4.4.3 The Open Dialectic

Because the destiny of Jesus Christ is interwoven with that of this world in the cross, the resurrection of Jesus is not seen as a private Easter for his private Good Friday, but as the beginning of the sublation of the universal Good Friday, of this godforsaken world,<sup>152</sup> "as the beginning of the eschatological transformation of the world by its creator".<sup>153</sup> Jesus' "identity in cross and resurrection points the direction for coming events and

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.203.

<sup>152</sup> TH, p.211.

<sup>153</sup> CG, p.162.

makes a path for them".<sup>154</sup> Against the background of the Old Testament, "this event which is revealed in the cross and the Easter experiences points back to the promises of God and forwards to an *eschaton* in which his divinity is revealed in all".<sup>155</sup> The resurrection is a promise event.<sup>156</sup> It is an event that has to be understood "as the dawn and assured promise of the coming glory of God over all".<sup>157</sup> That is, God begins to abolish all negative element starting with the Christ event.

Moltmann even reads back from Jesus' resurrection that the godforsaken history of this world begins to be sublated in the concrete history of God in the death of Jesus on the cross on Golgotha.<sup>158</sup> He writes: "All human history, however much it may be determined by guilt and death, is taken up into this 'history of God', i.e. into the Trinity, and integrated into the future of the 'history of God'".<sup>159</sup> As he quotes W. Kramer that "the resurrection of Jesus ... qualifies (the cross) so that it becomes an eschatological saving event",<sup>160</sup> the cross can be viewed as the beginning

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<sup>154</sup> *TH*, p.201.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.200-201.

<sup>156</sup> *CG*, p.173.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.246.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

of the sublation of this godforsaken world. In this context, Moltmann claims that "the trinitarian God-event on the cross ... opens up the future".<sup>161</sup>

Nevertheless, the dialectic of the cross and the resurrection "is an open dialectic, which find its resolving synthesis only in the *eschaton* of all things".<sup>162</sup> This is because on the cross God opens himself in Christ to accept and adopt this forsaken world. The "Trinity is no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for men on earth, which stems from the cross of Christ".<sup>163</sup> Therefore, the dialectic is not closed when God raises Jesus from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is but a beginning and a promise of the sublation of this forsaken world. It is only when all negative element is totally abolished in the *eschaton*, that the ultimate synthesis arrives. In this vein, the future of Jesus Christ is very significant for the future of this world. This world waits for its future by waiting for Jesus Christ's future.<sup>164</sup>

#### 4.5 Conclusion

##### 4.5.1 The Revelatory and Soteriological Significance

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p.255.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.249.

<sup>164</sup> TH, p.83.

God reveals himself in the Christ event. First of all this event has to be understood against the background of the Old Testament history of promise. The God of Israel reveals himself in the promise which is ultimately about the *eschaton* of this world, that is, an eschatological future in which even death will be overcome. And this promise culminates in Christ's resurrection in the New Testament. "Once and for all ... Christ validated God's promise."<sup>165</sup> In the resurrection "God *guaranteed* his promise by ... *enacting* it in Jesus Christ".<sup>166</sup>

However, the death which God overcomes so as to validate his promise is that of the risen Christ. If the resurrection reveals God's power overcoming death, then the cross reveals God's suffering unto death. Therefore, in the Christ event God discloses himself not merely "as the one who raises and will raise the dead",<sup>167</sup> but also as the one who can suffer and die on the cross.<sup>168</sup> "If in the resurrection of Jesus one sees 'God in action', in the crucifixion of Jesus one sees 'God in passion'".<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> G.G. O'Collins, "Spes Quaerens Intellectum", *Interpretation* 22/1 (1968), p.45.

<sup>166</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.203.

<sup>167</sup> O'Collins, "Spes Quaerens Intellectum", p.45.

<sup>168</sup> *CG*, p.216.

<sup>169</sup> M.D. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p.123.

In other words, God gives his promise in the Christ event to this world in a dialectical way. God the Son himself constitutes the promise in the resurrection which presupposes the cross. In this context, O'Collins rightly says that "the resurrection does not merely confirm the promise, but opens the future in a new hope".<sup>170</sup> This means that Christ's resurrection does not merely repeat God's word-promise of overcoming death but in reality opens a way to the fulfillment of this promise.

This is because God's self-revelation in the Christ event is a kind of double negation. In the Old Testament the fact that God gives his promise to Israel in his words implies that God does not participate in the present reality analogically when he reveals himself. In the New Testament the fact that God gives his promise to the world in Jesus Christ means that God is involved in the present reality dialectically. God has to negate himself unto death in Christ firstly so that his act of raising the crucified Christ from death, as a negation of the negation, becomes the promise of God for the future of this world. Through the first negation on the cross, God identifies himself with this suffering world so that the sublation of this godforsaken world can start with the resurrection of Jesus. In this context, it can be said that the resurrection, as the negation of Christ's death, "opens the future in a new hope" for the world.

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<sup>170</sup> O'Collins, "Spes Quaerens Intellectum", p.45.

God's promise given in Christ, then, is simultaneously his self-revelation and his soteriological action for the world. However, such an act of self-revelation and salvation does not finish yet. They both point to the ultimate future in which all negative will be transformed and overcome.

#### 4.5.2 The Initiation of God's History and its Characteristic

When God reveals himself in the dialectical Christ event, he initiates his history. From the contradiction between Jesus' death and his resurrection derives a history forward to the *eschaton*. The crucial point of such an initiation is that the dialectic of the Christ event is not a closed dialectic but an open one. On the one hand, it is open to accept this godforsaken world on the cross. On the other hand, it is open to the future in the resurrection. Because on the cross Jesus identifies himself with this world, his resurrection does not stand for the final overcoming of the negative but only the beginning of negating the death of this world. Then, before the risen Christ there is still an eschatological future for God to pursue that this godforsaken world has to be totally sublated in God's history so that "God will be all in all".<sup>171</sup> The future of Jesus Christ is a future in which

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<sup>171</sup> As Bauckham observes, this is a text which has always been a favourite of Moltmann's. ["Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross", *Scottish Journal of Theology*

God will be in everything and everything will be in God. In this way, a history of God is initiated in the Christ event for the sake of this world.

Such a kind of history has several characteristics. Firstly, God's history is inseparable from the history of this world.<sup>172</sup> On the one hand, God's history is possible only when he participates in this world dialectically. On the other hand, God's history comes to its end only when it brings the history of the world to an end.

Secondly, God's history is a history of overcoming the godforsakenness of this world. He opens himself in Jesus Christ to the nothingness so as to share the destiny of this world in the cross. He raises Jesus from the dead so as to begin to overcome the eschatological death of this world.

Thirdly, God's history is a history of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit are involved in the Christ event. Their interactions are dialectical. While the Father surrenders the Son and the Son surrenders

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30/4 (1977), p.310.] Cf. *HP*, p.87; *TH*, p.88; *EP*, pp.40, 66, 83, 120.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *CG*, p.270.



himself unto death, it is the Spirit who re-unites them by raising the Son from the dead.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Bauckham rightly points out that Moltmann's doctrine of Holy Spirit is not adequate in *The Crucified God*. (*Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.110) But this does not deny the trinitarian character of the Christ event.

## 5 The Retroactive Effect of God's Economic Activity

### 5.1 Introduction

In the Christ event, God gives his promise to the world in a dialectical way. Epistemologically, God reveals the eschatological future to the world in Christ's resurrection which contradicts Jesus' cross. Soteriologically, God begins to fulfill this promise by starting with God's identifying with this world in the cross and his sublation of Jesus' death in the resurrection. Then, God's history is initiated for the sake of this world. It is interwoven with the history of this world.

However, according to the traditional Christian theology, God's trinitarian history with this world belongs to the category of the economic Trinity. It is only a reflection of the immanent Trinity. Moltmann does not agree to this view. God's history on the cross is no mere revelatory and soteriological event, but also a theological event at the same time. Moltmann rejects the traditional distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinities in order to get rid of the notion that God's history is merely a reflection of God's inner being.

Is this Hegelianism? Does Moltmann have a tendency to see God's history as his self-realisation?

Actually, Moltmann's doctrine of God is not a theological version of Hegel's philosophy. Nor does he want to propose that God needs to participate in the history of the world so as to realise himself. In this way, Moltmann has to establish a different concept of God that can fulfill two functions. On the one hand, it can justify that God's history on the cross or God's acts on the world is not the moving image of eternity. On the other hand, it can avoid being charged with the view that God's trinitarian history is his self-realisation in the world.

This chapter falls into two parts. The first part tackles how Moltmann denies the traditional concept of God by establishing a different concept of God around the cross event. The second part deals with the problem of Hegelianism and the self-realisation of God by further clarifying the dialectic in the cross event and the correct relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinities.

## 5.2 Two Different Doctrines of the Trinity

This part consists of two sections. The first one is to see what kind of God is implied in the distinction which is rejected. The second one is to analyse the doctrine of God which is going to replace the rejected one. The first way can help clarifying what kind of concept of God is

going to be established from a negative way. Furthermore, by singling out the character of the rejected concept of God, one can understand the significance of Moltmann's revolution in the concept of God.

#### 5.2.1 The Traditional Distinction Between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity

Moltmann considers the way which the Christian theology distinguishes the Trinity's immanence from its economy is out of the experience of this world, not out of God.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, God is a God in heaven but not of this world. In the following the origin, the underlying doctrine and the character of this traditional concept of God, that is, the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is viewed as original and copy, are to be examined. After that Moltmann's revolution in the concept of God will be analysed against this theological background.

##### 5.2.1.1 The Origin of the Distinction

As J.J. O'Donnell writes, "in the classical Christian tradition theologians distinguished between the economic and the immanent Trinity, between the being of God for us

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<sup>1</sup> TKG, pp.158-159.

and the being of God in himself".<sup>2</sup> However, he goes on to point out that the motives behind such thinking are soteriological<sup>3</sup> rather than theological: "Only God has the power to save us."<sup>4</sup> The salvific power of the economic Trinity is grounded in the immanent Trinity. They do not ask the other way what the Trinity in the economy of salvation means for the immanent Trinity.

C.M. LaCugna points out that the crucial moment of such doctrinal development happens in the christological and trinitarian controversies of the fourth century.<sup>5</sup> In the pre-Arian period, "the economy was at the center of Christian speculation".<sup>6</sup> "The representative expression of this phase was subordinationism, which was an interpretation of Scripture based on salvation history. At this point there was no need to appeal to the distinction between *oikonomia* and *theologia*, nor any intention to teach that the Son is ontologically inferior to God."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.124

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> C.M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), p.8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In Arius' view, "the subordination of Christ to God according to the economy (*kat' oikonomian*) implied subordination at the level of the God's being (*kata theologian*)".<sup>8</sup> In other words, "Jesus Christ is a lesser God; the one who is sent is less than the one who sends".<sup>9</sup> The consequence of this theological statement is considered to be dangerous "because it jeopardized salvation through Christ: If Christ is not God, we are not saved through him".<sup>10</sup>

In response to Arius, "the Council of Nicaea (325) taught that the Christ is *homoousios* with God".<sup>11</sup> "This immediately shifted attention away from the patent subordination of the economy to an intradivine realm, *theologia*, in which God and Christ, Father and Son, could be equal in substance".<sup>12</sup> In this way, the conception of the immanent Trinity is introduced into Christian theology to be the ontological ground for the salvation of this world.

However, owing to the unquestioned axiom of divine impassibility, the suffering of Christ in the economy of salvation contradicts the inner being of God's immanent

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Trinity.<sup>13</sup> In order to get around this contradiction, Athanasius and others affirm that Christ suffers in his humanity (*kat' oikonomian*) but not in his divinity (*kata theologian*), not as the Logos.<sup>14</sup> The Logos himself takes human being's flesh and assumes its weakness for human beings' salvation, but "the changeless Logos could not in fact suffer these weaknesses".<sup>15</sup> God only suffers in his human nature but his divine nature is impassible. Although the Logos is aware of the sufferings of his human nature, accepts them as his own, because the human nature is his, he does not experience them as suffering.<sup>16</sup> This results in the opening of a gap between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.

The Cappadocians then "made a distinction between the 'immanent Trinity' and the 'Trinity in the economy of salvation' ... as between original and copy, idea and manifestation".<sup>17</sup> God's inner life and his external act are posited in different realms of eternal and transient respectively. They do not share the same ontological status so that the relationship of the immanent Trinity to the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp.8, 42.

<sup>15</sup> F.M. Young, "A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22/2 (1971), p.107.

<sup>16</sup> R. Bauckham, "In defence of *The Crucified God*" in *The Power and Weakness of God*, ed. N.M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990), p.110.

<sup>17</sup> *CG*, p.239.

economic trinity is not the same as the latter to the former.

Within this dual framework, the suffering of Christ then can be considered as happening in the economic Trinity but not in the immanent Trinity. In this way, God's inner life is kept pure from being affected by his external act to the world. And the axiom of divine impassibility is maintained.

Obviously, the axiom of divine impassibility is the crucial key that makes the Trinity be differentiated as the immanent Trinity and the economy Trinity. It plays a decisive role in the relationship between these two. But what is the reason of taking such divine impassability as God's being? The answer to this question is apparent that only an impassible God can save the transitory world. It follows that the reason for the distinction between God's immanence and his economy is soteriological as well. And this is derived from the experience of this world.

Before the relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity is examined, a close look at the emergence of this axiom is necessary.

#### 5.2.1.2 The Emergence of the Axiom of Divine Impassibility



The emergence of the axiom of divine impassability is no accident. According to Moltmann, it is introduced into Christian theology in the context of human being's asking for salvation as he realizes himself as finitude.<sup>18</sup> Since the days of the early church the question of divine being or God is constantly connected with man's self understanding. How does human being's experience of his own finitude determine God's being?

The key point lies in man's longing for salvation. Man's experience of his finitude is not the sufficient reason for him to posit an eternal God. It is only when man finds that he cannot bear with being passing into nothing, he will seek for an eternal realm which is ontologically different from this transient one. And the salvation of this world is possible only when it participates in this eternal realm. The salvation of this world can be found only in the divine being in its unity, indivisibility and unchangeableness. Clearly, then, this is very Platonic. Therefore, Moltmann is right when he writes: "Everything that exists and yet does not endure raises the question of a being which exists and endures eternally, and which can give it endurance in the midst of impermanence."<sup>19</sup>

When the Christian theology adopts such a pattern of thinking, it unavoidably takes up the concept of God which

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp.87-88.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.87.

is assumed in the view-point of salvation: "The divine being is intransitory, immortal, unchangeable and impassible."<sup>20</sup> This is because "God cannot suffer, God cannot die ... in order to bring suffering, mortal being under his protection."<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the axiom of divine passibility has "its origin in the experience of finitude and its context in the hope of immortality".<sup>22</sup> When this axiom is taken along with the concept of the finitude of this world by the Christian theology, a metaphysical doctrine of the two natures is formulated. According to Moltmann, this metaphysical doctrine is the underlying principle of the distinction between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity.

#### 5.2.1.3 The Metaphysical Doctrine of the Two Natures

This doctrine is very simple but its consequence is very significant. It is about the world and God: "the world is evanescent, God is non-evanescent; the world is temporal, God is eternal; the world is passible, God is impassible; the world is dependent, God is independent."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.216.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.158.

This doctrine has two characteristics. In the first place, methodologically, it is derived from the experience of the world that infinite and finite are mutually exclusive, not from the experience of God. In the second place, theologically, the infinite and the finite are mutually exclusive.

As mentioned above, this doctrine starts with man's experience of his finitude. The problem does not lie in the starting point but the method of deriving God's being from the nature of man. If finitude is to be denied, then its opposite, infinitude, has to be assumed. The underlying thought form is the abstract logic of either-or. The thing that is going to be known is not allowed to manifest itself in its own way but is limited to be known as either A or - A. However, is it appropriate for man to determine God's being by the way of negating his nature?

It follows that the theological consequence is very significant. By this way, God is posited as totally different from the world. He is the infinite one who cannot be finite. He cannot suffer. However, Christ is suffering on the cross. Then, how is the doctrine of two natures, that is, the distinction between God and the world, to be preserved when God is involved in the world in Christ? "Traditionally this has been done by differentiating

between the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'economic' Trinity."<sup>24</sup>

#### 5.2.1.4 The Structure of the Distinction

##### 5.2.1.4.1 The Meaning: Immanent Trinity and Economic Trinity

First of all, what is it meant by the theological terms "economic Trinity" and "immanent Trinity"? "'Economic Trinity' designates the presence of the Trinity or of the Persons of the Trinity within the history of salvation" while "the Trinity is understood in itself, the internal relationship between the three Persons, the mystery of trinitarian procession - all this is known as the immanent Trinity".<sup>25</sup>

Their difference can be further seen from a relational perspective: economic Trinity is the "Trinity in relation to creation and the revealing of God through history" whereas immanent Trinity is the "Trinity understood in itself through the interrelationship of its three

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<sup>24</sup> R. Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), p.215.

<sup>25</sup> L. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), pp.95-96.

members".<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the former is about God's relationship to the world and the latter is about God's relationship to himself.

#### 5.2.1.4.2 The Distinction: Original and Copy

Moltmann finds that the patristic tradition "liked to distinguish and relate the Trinity's immanence and economy as the Platonists distinguished and related the Idea and its appearance".<sup>27</sup> That is, it "distinguished in its own way between inner being of God and salvation history, as between original and copy, idea and manifestation".<sup>28</sup> The modern differentiation between "God in himself" and "God for us" is inheriting such a distinction.

Indeed, such a distinction has its epistemological and ontological senses. Ontologically, the copy or the appearance is not as real as the original or the Idea. The former is just the imperfect manifestation of the latter. It cannot be viewed as the perfect original without any distortion. In this way, there is an ontological distinction between these two. In the case of the distinction between the economic Trinity and the immanent Trinity, it is the same. The Trinity in the economy of

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<sup>26</sup> Ed. D.F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to the Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* vol.I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.328.

<sup>27</sup> TKG, p.158.

<sup>28</sup> CG, pp.239-240.

salvation history cannot be seen as the essence of God. Rather it is a reflection of God's inner being but not God's real essence. Only the immanent Trinity is the perfect original. It is in this sense that the immanent Trinity is called the essential Trinity. In this way, the economic Trinity is accidental to the constituents of God's being.

Correspondingly, knowing God means knowing God's inner life rather than his external works. Proper knowledge of God cannot be got through knowing God's relationship to the world in his salvation history but through speculating on the inner divine life. This is because knowledge of the copy, appearance is not the same as that of the original, Idea. The former is merely the knowledge of the reflection of the really real whereas the latter is the knowledge of the really real itself. Apparently, the former cannot replace the latter. Therefore, the immanent Trinity alone is the unique true object of the knowledge of God.

#### 5.2.1.4.3 The Relationship: One Way

Like the relationship between the copy and the original, the economic Trinity is not independent from the immanent Trinity ontologically. God's external action towards the world is based on his inner being. What is reflected in the copy is beforehand in the original itself. This unilinear view of correspondence is seen in Barth's

distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity. He "first of all adhered to the Platonic notion of correspondence: what God revealed himself as being in Jesus Christ, he is in eternity, 'beforehand in himself'".<sup>29</sup> "For this is the truth of God in time and eternity: 'God corresponds to himself'".<sup>30</sup>

At this point one thing is worthy noting. Obviously, the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is one way, not two way. God's relationship to the world simply corresponds with his relationship to himself. The economic Trinity merely reflects or reveals the immanent Trinity. It does not have any retroactive effect on his inner being. On the contrary, the divine inner relationship determines God's relationship to the world.

In a word, ontologically, the immanent Trinity is constituted by itself alone and the economic Trinity is not essential to God's being. The one way relationship is precisely the manifestation of such nature of the traditional distinction.

#### 5.2.1.5 Summary

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<sup>29</sup> *TKG*, p.159. Cf. *CG*, p.240

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

It is clear that in the traditional Christian theology the axiom of divine impassibility is the governing principle of the distinction of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. It does not allow that God can suffer in his divine nature for the sake of man's salvation from this suffering world, though his human nature does suffer. In this way, the immanent Trinity is kept pure from being affected by the suffering of Christ. Then, the immanent Trinity is taken as the essence of God's being and history is taken as the moving image of eternity.

However, for Moltmann, the underlying reason of the axiom of God's impassibility has its logical limitation in understanding suffering, on the one hand; the reason of the emergence of such logical limitation is that this axiom is derived from experience of the world rather from experience of God in the cross, on the other hand.

#### 5.2.2 Moltmann: The Emergence of the Trinity in the Christ Event

In Moltmann's mind, the doctrine of the Trinity is not the appendix to the Christian dogma,<sup>31</sup> but the innermost core of Christianity.<sup>32</sup> Obviously, such a view-point cannot be separable from his theological analysis of the Christ

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<sup>31</sup> F. Schleiermacher, under the directing of the experience-oriented theology, deals with the doctrine of the Trinity in an appendix to his great dogmatic synthesis *The Christian Faith*. Cf. *CG*, p.238.

<sup>32</sup> *CG*, p.235.



event, especially the cross. For him, the cross is not merely an event for this world, but also an event within God. That is, it is no mere a soteriological event but also a theological event.

#### 5.2.2.1 The Demand for a Revolution in the Concept of God

Moltmann asks: "*What does the cross of Jesus mean for God himself?*"<sup>33</sup> He quotes P. Althaus affirmatively: "Jesus died for God before he died for us."<sup>34</sup> "The death of Jesus is a statement about God himself."<sup>35</sup> As W.W. Willis, Jr. observes, Moltmann moves "the meaning of the cross beyond a soteriological context only, to its implications for theological concepts".<sup>36</sup> Does such a move have any logical necessity within Moltmann's theology? To put it particularly, under what condition does the cross not only have meaning for this world but also for God himself?

R. Bauckham rightly points out that Moltmann's basis concept of the total contradiction of cross and resurrection demands a revolution in the concept of God.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.201.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.201; *FC*, p.62.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.202.

<sup>36</sup> W.W. Willis, Jr, *Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism* (Atlanta: Scholars , 1987), p.98. Cf. *CG*, p.201.

<sup>37</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.97.

According to Moltmann, Jesus' resurrection totally contradicts his cross.<sup>38</sup> "If, abandoned by his God and Father, he was raised through the 'glory of the Father', then eschatological faith in the cross of Jesus Christ must acknowledge the theological trial between God and God."<sup>39</sup>

Moltmann's concept of total contradiction implies that God suffers in the cross. God the Son is wholly dead and wholly raised. But how can God be dead? This is against the apathetic axiom of the traditional Christian theology.

#### 5.2.2.2 The Affirmation of God's Suffering

Moltmann claims the axiom of divine impassibility or apathy has the logical limitation that "it only perceives a single alternative: either essential incapacity for suffering, or a fateful subjection to suffering".<sup>40</sup> This is derived from man's experience of his own transience and his longing for salvation through the abstract logic of either-or. Moltmann considers that the saying of God's impassibility in Christian theology means that "God is not subjected to suffering in the same way as transient, created being".<sup>41</sup> It is right to say that "God is not

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<sup>38</sup> *TH*, pp.197-202.

<sup>39</sup> *CG*, p.152.

<sup>40</sup> *TKG*, p.23. Cf. *CG*, p.230.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*.

changeable" only when it is understood as a simile that "God is not changeable as creatures are changeable".<sup>42</sup>

If this is so, then how should God's suffering be understood properly? For Moltmann, "there is a third form of suffering: active suffering - the voluntary laying oneself open to another and allowing oneself to be intimately affected by him; that is to say, the suffering of passionate love".<sup>43</sup> In this way, Moltmann avoids saying that "God is capable of suffering because of a deficiency in his being".<sup>44</sup> Rather, God "suffers from the love which is the superabundance and overflowing of his being".<sup>45</sup> In this sense, God is passionate.

#### 5.2.2.3 The Cross as the Material Principle and the Trinity as the Formal Principle

If God can die and does die on the cross, then, how should it be grasped properly? Moltmann writes:

The cross of the Son divides God from God to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction. The resurrection of the Son abandoned by God unites God in the most intimate fellowship. How is this Easter day fellowship of God with God to be conceived in the Good Friday cross? To comprehend God in the crucified

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<sup>42</sup> *CG*, p.229.

<sup>43</sup> *TKG*, p.23. Cf. *CG*, p.230.

<sup>44</sup> *CG*, p.230. Cf. *TKG*, p.23.

<sup>45</sup> *TKG*, p.23. Cf. *CG*, p.230.

Jesus, abandoned by God, requires a 'revolution in the concept of God'.<sup>46</sup>

Hence, it is within Moltmann's theological development that a different kind of doctrine of God is required.

However, the revolution in the concept of God which is required by the cross has two inter-related senses. First of all, a trinitarian concept of God is needed to comprehend the cross event because the traditional simple concept of God fails to do so. Secondly, such a concept is to be determined concretely by the cross in turn so that the traditional distinction between God in himself and God for us has to be abolished.

Why cannot the cross be grasped in terms of the traditional simple concept of God? This is because "what happened on the cross was a happening between God and God: there God disputes with God; there God cries out to God; there God dies in God".<sup>47</sup> The problem is: How should one understand such a paradoxical phenomenon happening on the cross: God is dead and yet is not dead?<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, a simple concept of God is not sufficient.<sup>49</sup> It requires another kind of concept of God to comprehend

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<sup>46</sup> CG, p.152.

<sup>47</sup> FC, p.65.

<sup>48</sup> CG, p.203.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

the contradiction between God and God. In this case, Moltmann finds that the only way to think of God is in "dialectically trinitarian terms".<sup>50</sup> Then, the revolution in the concept of God, firstly, means that the simple concept of God is to be replaced by the dialectically trinitarian concept of God. Accordingly, the cross has to be understood as a trinitarian event and the Christ event as a dialectically trinitarian event.

In this sense, Moltmann writes: "The form of the crucified Christ is the Trinity."<sup>51</sup>

"The death of Jesus is then to be understood not simply as the 'death of God' ... but as 'death in God', an event within the relationship of the three persons, from which the meaning of Godhead emerges."<sup>52</sup> That is, in turn, the concept of the Trinity is determined by the cross event. The relationship between the theology of the cross and the doctrine of the Trinity is not one way, but reciprocal.

The cross, when it is understood in terms of trinitarian context, is no mere external work of God. It requires a different understanding of God's trinitarian being. As T.D. Parker says of Moltmann's reading of the

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<sup>50</sup> *FC*, p.66.

<sup>51</sup> *CG*, p.246.

<sup>52</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.98. Cf. *CG*, p.207.

Christian God, "the cross, as the centerpiece of the relation of Father and Son (along with its dialectical antithesis in resurrection), is not simply an event *ad extra* but the living God".<sup>53</sup> Moltmann explicitly expresses: "The God event takes place on the cross of the risen Christ. Here God has not just acted externally, in his unattainable glory and eternity. Here he has acted in himself and has gone on to suffer in himself."<sup>54</sup>

"How much is God affected by Jesus' death?"<sup>55</sup> "The cross cannot leave the divine being unaffected."<sup>56</sup> This is because in the trinitarian context, Jesus as the second person of the Trinity brings the suffering and death which is represented by the cross into God's very being.<sup>57</sup> For Moltmann, this death is supposed to touch him at the very heart, and not merely his outward relationships. It is in this vein that Moltmann asks the question: "What does the cross of Jesus mean for God?" Obviously, it is the trinitarian framework that provides the condition for one

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<sup>53</sup> T.D. Parker, "The Political Meaning of the Doctrine of Trinity: Some Theses", *Journal of Religion* 60/2 (1980), p.174.

<sup>54</sup> *CG*, p.205.

<sup>55</sup> *FC*, p.64.

<sup>56</sup> Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism, and the Doctrine of the Trinity*, p.98.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

to arrive at such an understanding of God. "The cross stands at the heart of the trinitarian being of God".<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, Moltmann says: "The content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the real cross of Christ himself."<sup>59</sup>

Accordingly, the theology of the cross and the doctrine of the Trinity require one another with definite necessity. Moltmann draws a famous formula for the relation between these two: "The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ. The formal principle of knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity."<sup>60</sup>

Such a speaking of the relationship is illuminated by I. Kant's famous epistemological statements, which are quoted by Moltmann: "Concepts without perception are empty" and "perceptions without concepts are blind".<sup>61</sup> Parallel to these are Moltmann's assertions: "The perception of the trinitarian concept of God is the cross of Jesus ... The theological concept for the perception of the crucified Christ is the doctrine of the Trinity."<sup>62</sup> Obviously, Moltmann intends to make the point that without the cross

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<sup>58</sup> *CG*, p.207.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.246.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.241; Cf. *FC*, p.74.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.240.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.240-241.

the trinitarian concept of God is empty and without the doctrine of the Trinity the cross is blind.

#### 5.2.2.4 The Inappropriateness of the Distinction between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity

If God's very inner being cannot be separated from the way God appears in his acts of salvation, then the traditional distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is inappropriate. Such a distinction implies that God's external work, like his salvific acts, is merely a copy of his inner being and does not have any reciprocal influence on it. In Moltmann's view, the cross is the external work of God but is not external to God's being. Rather, "the nature of God would have to be the human history of Christ and not a divine 'nature' separate from man".<sup>63</sup> In the trinitarian event of the cross God is in himself what he is for us.<sup>64</sup> The immanent Trinity is inseparable from the economic Trinity ontologically.

Then, as Moltmann puts it: "We cannot say of God who he is of himself and in himself; we can only say who he is for us in the history of Christ which reaches us in our history."<sup>65</sup> Moltmann even proposes to "give up the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.239.

<sup>64</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.98.

<sup>65</sup> CG, p.238.



distinction between the 'God in himself' and the 'God for us', or between 'God in his mystery' and 'God veiled in the flesh of Christ'".<sup>66</sup>

It follows that the immanent Trinity cannot be comprehended apart from the Trinity in the economy of salvation epistemologically. "Anyone who really talks of the Trinity talks of the cross of Jesus, and does not speculate in heavenly riddles."<sup>67</sup> No one can articulate any appropriate statement about the Trinity without talking of the cross of Christ. "If it is the event of the cross which requires trinitarian language, then the doctrine of the Trinity is no mere theological speculation remote from salvation-history,"<sup>68</sup> "a kind of theological higher mathematics for the initiated".<sup>69</sup>

Consequently, the revolution in the concept of God which is required by the cross, for Moltmann, can be expressed in K. Rahner's famous thesis: "The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."<sup>70</sup> Moltmann requires no mere

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.239.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.207.

<sup>68</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.98.

<sup>69</sup> *FC*, p.80.

<sup>70</sup> *CG*, p.240. Cf. *FC*, p.76; *TKG*, p.160. This axiom is seen in K. Rahner's *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (Tunbridge: Burns and Oates, 1970), p.22. Bibliography of commentaries on Rahner's trinitarian theology can be found

trinitarian framework to comprehend God in the cross, but also a totally different doctrine of the Trinity.

#### 5.2.2.5 Summary

In Moltmann's view, God's passibility in the cross, in contrast to the traditional Christian theology, is the underlying principle of his revolution in the concept of God. In contrast to traditional Christian theology's view of God's impassibility, this understanding of God is not out of the experience of the world but out of the experience of God in the cross. However, in *The Crucified God* Moltmann tends to think that all kind of distinction between God's immanence and economy is out of the experience of the world. And this will allow the emergence of the axiom of divine impassibility in the doctrine of God. Therefore, he seems not to allow for any distinction.

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, Moltmann makes a difference between the distinction of Trinity based on the experience of the world and that based on God's experience. He contends that "the distinction between the Trinity's immanence and its economy must lie in the Trinity itself and must be implemented by it itself".<sup>71</sup> "It must

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in LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, pp.233-234, n.6.

<sup>71</sup> TKG, p.159.

not be imposed on it from outside."<sup>72</sup> By contrast, the traditional distinction of the Trinity is implemented from outside.

Correspondingly, this requires a different understanding of the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. However, when Moltmann arrives at the point that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa, what does he really mean by this? It seems that the immanent Trinity is dissolved into the economic Trinity and God is dissolved into world history. The theological consequence of this notion is very serious. In the following, a further clarification of this is going to be made.

### 5.3 Problem and Clarification

#### 5.3.1 The Problem of God's Self-Realisation in World History

Actually, when Moltmann proposes to abandon the traditional distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity and takes up Rahner's thesis that "the economic Trinity is the economic Trinity, and vice versa" in *The Crucified God*,<sup>73</sup> he does not further clarify the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> CG, pp.238-240.

meaning of the identity of them. However, as Moltmann admits in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, it "sounds like the dissolution of the one in the other",<sup>74</sup> that is, it seems that the immanent Trinity is dissolved into the economic Trinity.

Furthermore, when the cross in the economic Trinity is interpreted as a dialectical trinitarian event, Moltmann's critics incline to understand it in terms of Hegel's trinitarianism. This is because Moltmann employs Hegel's dialectic to interpret the Christ event that God negates himself so as to take up the history of the world into his own history. When God's history in the cross is identified with the history of the world, it seems that God is going to realise himself through world history dialectically. In this way, it is very natural for one to think that Moltmann, to a certain extent, shares the character of Hegel's trinitarianism which is different from that of the Christian tradition.

In short, when the identity of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity is understood as the dissolution of the one in the other and Moltmann's interpretation of God's history in the Christ event in terms of Hegel's dialectic, God's economic history in the world is comprehended as the dialectical process of God's own self-realisation by most

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<sup>74</sup> TKG, p.160.

of his critics. According to Bauckham's analysis, this has two senses.

Firstly, "at worst this means that 'the dialectic collapses into identity', i.e. God empties himself into what is alien to him in order to resolve identity and non-identity into a higher kind of identity."<sup>75</sup> Obviously, this is an understanding of Moltmann in terms of Hegel strictly. In this sense, W. Kasper asks rhetorically: "Does not the danger exist here, that the miracle of God's love, the cross, is dissolved in dialectic, which turns into identity?"<sup>76</sup>

Secondly, "at best Moltmann seems to make world history the process by which God realised himself."<sup>77</sup> This does not necessarily mean that Moltmann's trinitarianism is Hegelian. However, he still cannot avoid Kasper's rhetorical question: "How does he safeguard himself from

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<sup>75</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, pp.106-107.

<sup>76</sup> W. Kasper, "Revolution im Gottesverständnis? Zur Situation des ökumenischen Dialogs nach Jürgen Moltmanns *Der Gekreuzigte Gott*" in *DGG*, p.146. Translation is cited from J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.148.

<sup>77</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, pp.106-107.

the (doubtless not desired) consequence, that God needs history, in order to come to himself?"<sup>78</sup>

However, no matter what sense it is, as Bauckham analyses, two consequences follow.<sup>79</sup> In the first place, "it compromises the freedom of God in relation to the world".<sup>80</sup> If God needs world history to become himself, then the world is necessary to God's being. God's freedom is not absolute but relative to the world. The divine freedom is at stake.

In the second place, it makes evil necessary to God's becoming himself. If God needs world history to realise himself, then the alienation of the world is a necessary moment in the divine process. That is, the existence of evil, the negative element, has its rational necessity in the process of God's self-realisation. It follows that the scandal of the cross is turned into a rational necessity as well.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Kasper, "Revolution im Gottesverständnis? Zur Situation des ökumenischen Dialogs nach Jürgen Moltmanns *Der Gekreuzigte Gott*" in *DGG*, p.146. Translation is cited from O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope*, p.148.

<sup>79</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.107.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M.J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p.193.

Apparently, the crucial point lies in whether Moltmann holds the theological view-point that God realises himself dialectically through the world. Can the dialectical trinitarian Christ event be interpreted as God's self-realisation, God's self-constitution? This problem is going to be approached in two ways. Firstly, is Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity the same as Hegel's that God realises himself in the Christ event? That is, can Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity be understood as Hegel's trinitarianism in the strict sense? Secondly, if it is not, does Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity and theology of the cross share the same characteristic, that is, the world as the process of God's self-realisation, in his own way, but not in Hegelian sense?

### 5.3.2 A Higher Identity of Identity and Non-Identity?

#### 5.3.2.1 Hegel's Dialectical Trinitarianism<sup>82</sup>

D.M. Schlitt says: "Hegel's system as a whole is the fullest philosophical expression of his trinitarian claim."<sup>83</sup> In Hegel's view, as the major dogma of Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity expresses the principal tenet of his speculative philosophy in the form

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<sup>82</sup> For a brilliant discussion of Hegel's trinitarianism, see D.M. Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim: A Critical Reflection* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984)

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.5.

of *Vorstellung* (representation).<sup>84</sup> Indeed, for him, Christianity has the same true content as philosophy but differs from the latter in form.<sup>85</sup>

Hegel sees deep speculative meaning in the doctrine of the Trinity: "God is movement, self-transcendence towards the particular, and return to unity; that his unity is fundamentally a return of diremption, that he is three-in-one."<sup>86</sup> The Trinity represents the dialectical movement of the Absolute Spirit. It is through this process that the Spirit is truly actual or real (*wirklich*).

This dialectical self-realising process is constituted of three movements. The first movement of the Spirit is within its own essential being. In a second movement, eternal Spirit goes out of itself into external existence, coming to exist as an object over against itself. In a third movement Spirit returns to itself, negating the first negation. The first is represented by Christian theology in terms of the immanent Trinity while the second is the economic Trinity. The last two movements are logically connected to the first movement. They are the manifestations of the latter.

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<sup>84</sup> C. Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.489.

<sup>85</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Christian Religion: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Part III: *The Revelatory, Consummate, Absolute Religion*, ed. and trans. P.C. Hodgson (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), pp.291-292.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, p.489.



In the eternal immanent Trinity the Father begets the Son and they are united in the Holy Spirit. It is a process of God's "infinite distinction of oneself from oneself",<sup>87</sup> diremption and return contained within his eternal essence. In philosophical terms, the universal undergoes diremption into the particular, and the particular restores to the universal in the individual.<sup>88</sup> Because such inner divine life is abstract for lacking of actuality, God has to go out of himself as to earn his actuality in the economic Trinity.

This act of going out, indeed, is one repeating God's self-differentiation within the immanent Trinity in another level. The eternal generation of the Son by the Father is manifested in the self-negation of the Absolute Spirit as the world. The immanent Trinity is dissolved in the economic Trinity by negating itself. The act of returning, then, is another one repeating God's synthesis in eternity in a true and actual sense. The contradiction between the Spirit and the world is resolved in a higher identity, which in Christian imagery is the unity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>87</sup> Hegel, *The Christian Religion: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, pp.67-68.

<sup>88</sup> B.M.G. Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p.66.

Simply, there is a correspondence between the immanent and the economic Trinities.<sup>89</sup> "The spheres of the immanent divine life are the same as those of worldly life, and the otherness within God's life is the *truth* of otherness as it appears in the form of the finite world and consciousness."<sup>90</sup> The immanent Trinity is reenacted in the economic Trinity, the creation of the world and the finite spirit as other than God and the sublation of the difference, so as to become an actual God.

In this sense, Hegel says: "Without the world God is not God."<sup>91</sup> S.J. Grenz and R.E. Olson comment on this assertion: "By this he meant that God is *not* a self-sufficient being in and for himself; rather, God *needs* the world for his own self-actualization. World history is also God's history."<sup>92</sup> P.C. Hodgson also writes: "God is dependent or 'consequent' upon the world to become God in the true and actual sense."<sup>93</sup>

#### 5.3.2.2 The Difference of Moltmann from Hegel

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<sup>89</sup> P.C. Hodgson, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel" in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* vol.1, ed. N. Smart, J. Clayton, S. Katz and P. Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.101.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* vol.I, trans. E.B. Speirs and J.B. Sanderson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1895), pp.114-5, 200.

<sup>92</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the world in a Transitional Age*, p.38.

<sup>93</sup> Hodgson, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel", p.101.

It is very easy to have the impression of Hegelian trinitarianism when Moltmann explicitly says:

If one describes the life of God within the Trinity as the "history of God" (Hegel), this history of God contains within itself the whole abyss<sup>94</sup> of godforsakenness, absolute death and the non-God.

It remains for us to note that ... Hegel expressly acknowledges the doctrine of the Trinity, because this makes it possible to understand the cross as the "history of God".<sup>95</sup>

The cross is a moment of the dialectical trinitarian movement. As the history of God, the cross which is the climax of God's self-diremption or self-negating as non-God will be sublated by the Holy Spirit. The difference between God and non-God is to be abolished and synthesised in a higher identity. This Hegelian understanding may be further supported by Moltmann's quoting of Hegel's discussion of the Trinity in terms of the self-differentiating and the abolishing of the difference from *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.<sup>96</sup>

Probably this is Kasper's reading of Moltmann's theology of the cross. Naturally, he asks: Does this mean that God identifies with non-God so as to resolve the contradiction between these two in a higher identity?

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<sup>94</sup> CG, p.246.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.254.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

However, Moltmann's quotations of Hegel should be read as illustrations of the close relationship between the cross and the Trinity. This is because Moltmann distinguishes his doctrine of God from Hegel's dialectical trinitarianism in two ways. Firstly, he does not take the movement within the inner divine life as a dialectical one. Secondly, he does not consider that God's relationship to the world is a dialectical one as well. These two, indeed, further show that Moltmann and Hegel have different understanding of the meaning of "other".

Under what condition can two opposites be resolved in a higher identity in Hegel's dialectic? The contradiction between these two cannot be external but must be internal. This internal relationship is expressed in terms of self-negation. The negation is not from outside but from within. Then, A self-negates itself to be -A. -A is out of A alone so that it can return to A in a further negation. This is why Hegel calls dialectic "the indwelling tendency outwards" (*immanente Hinausgehen*)<sup>97</sup>.

Hegel's dialectic affects the meaning of other. Other is posited as God the Father's opposite by the Father through his self-negation in eternity. This other the Father confronts actually is not another subject other than the Father, but the Father's own negation. The Father

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<sup>97</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part one of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science* (1830), trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), §81, p.116.

becomes the Son. They are not two different subjects but two different modes of one absolute subject. The Trinity then is three repetitions of One God in a dialectical way.

In this way, the whole dialectical process is a drama in which the absolute subject plays all the different roles, not involving any other independent subject. The higher identity then is an identity in which it overcomes its own negation.

Moltmann believes that there is no real trinitarian diversity within God when he is conceived as an absolute subject who repeats himself dialectically.<sup>98</sup> There are three divine Persons existing at the same time. As the other to each other, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all subjects. They are not related to one another in a Hegelian dialectical way. Otherwise, "the Person would be nothing more than the triple self-repetition of God".<sup>99</sup> Rather, "by virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to an extent, that they are one".<sup>100</sup> In the perichoresis, the three divine Persons are one.

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<sup>98</sup> *TKG*, pp.139-140, 142-143.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

The different understanding of other within God in Hegel and Moltmann further leads to different understanding of the world as other of God.

For Hegel, the world is nothing other than the Spirit's self-negation, self-estrangement. As in the case of the divine inner life, the contradiction between the world and the Spirit is not external but internal. Then, a higher identity between the Spirit and the world can be arrived at through another internal negation.

Moltmann does not adopt Hegel's dialectic in understanding the relationship between God and the world. The world is not God's self-negation so that a second negation is not needed for synthesising these two. When God the Son identifies with the world by negating himself, he does not become the world in a Hegelian sense. The Son is not the world. The world is not the Son but an entity other than God. The Son just participates in the world and shares its destiny. His death is not identical with the death of the world, though they share the same death. His resurrection is not identical with the renewal of the world, though their natures are the same. When his death is negated by his resurrection, the world is not negated to be synthesised with God.

For Moltmann, God does not identify with the world in the cross event for the sake of abolishing the ontological

difference between God and the world in dialectic. Rather, in the dialectical Christ event, the cross and the resurrection, God is going to abolish the death of the world which divides God and the world. God the Son identifies with the world so as to adopt death as part of his own life. Then in his resurrection he does not merely abolish his own death but begins to abolish the death of this world. The resurrection of Christ is the promise to the godforsaken world that ultimately the death of this world will be abolished and the world will be transformed into a new world. Then, in the resurrection God and the world do not reach a higher identity in a Hegelian sense. It is the crucified Jesus and the risen Christ who arrive at a higher identity as the identity in total contradiction.

Accordingly, the charge of Hegelianism is not justified for Moltmann's dialectical interpretation of the Christ event. Even though Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, in a certain version, has the meaning that God needs the world for his own realization, it is not in a Hegelian way.

### 5.3.3 God Needs the World?

#### 5.3.3.1 The Cross as the Constitution of God's Being

Although Moltmann is not Hegelian, he can still be charged with holding a certain kind of theology of God

realising himself in the history of the world which leads to the justification of the necessity of evil and the compromise of God's freedom in relation to the world. Such a charge is based on his discussion of the relationship of the cross to the Trinity and God's inner life, and his identification of the immanent and economic Trinities. In this section the former is going to be discussed whereas the latter is left until the next section.

First of all, Moltmann's statements about the relationship of the cross to the Trinity can be seen in the articles "The 'Crucified God': A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross" and "Answer to the Criticism of *The Crucified God*" respectively:

... any one who intends to speak in a Christian way about God must recount and proclaim this story of Christ [i.e. the cross event] as the story of God, that is, as something which occurred between Father, Son, and Spirit and out of which the concept "God" is constituted, not only for men but also for God himself.<sup>101</sup>

Must the Christian doctrine of the Trinity begin with the history on the cross? Yes, it must. Because on the cross the One God splits. Therefore, the self-constitution of the Trinity must be talked of at this point.<sup>102</sup>

These statements are considered to be read as either that "in the event of the cross God becomes Trinity" or that

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<sup>101</sup> TTC, p.296.

<sup>102</sup> DGG, p.178. The German text: "Muß die christliche Trinitätslehre mit dem Geschehen am Kreuz beginnen? - Ja, sie muß es, weil anders am Kreuz die Einheit Gottes zerbricht. Darum muß hier von der Selbstkonstitution der Trinität gesprochen werden." My translation.



"the temporal event of the cross constitutes God's trinitarian being from eternity".<sup>103</sup> If this is the case, then God's history in the world is necessary for the constitution of his being. God needs the world for his self-realisation. It follows that evil is the necessary moment for God's self-constitution of the Trinity. But neither reading is Moltmann's intention.

On the one hand, when Moltmann says that "on the cross the One God splits", he does not mean that God *becomes* Trinity in the most Hegelian sense. It must be read according to his interpretation of the forsakenness on the cross. Then, what Moltmann really means is that on the cross the utmost intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son turns into the deepest separation.

On the other hand, these two paragraphs seem to be about the correct way of talking of the triune God or constituting the concept of God. Probably Moltmann intends to point out that in order to understand God's trinitarian being one has to start from the cross. If this is the case, then these are epistemological statements rather than ontological. Then the reading of these as God's self-constitution on the cross will fall into the fallacy of deriving the ontological sense from the epistemological statement.

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<sup>103</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.107.

However, the saying at the end of the first quotation above is difficult to understand: "not only for men but also for God himself". It is very odd to say that God has to start from the cross in order to understand himself. Probably Moltmann does not merely mean that God has to be known starting from the cross, but also tries to express the point that God is constituted in the event of the cross as well. Even so, this quotation does not have the meaning that the temporal event of the cross constitutes God's being "from eternity to eternity".

Yet there are other statements which strongly suggest that the cross determines the inner life of God from eternity to eternity in Moltmann's writing:

This history does not pass God by without leaving a trace. On the contrary, the crucified Jesus becomes God's eternal signature.<sup>104</sup>

... the Son's sacrifice of boundless love on Golgotha is from eternity already included in the exchange of the essential, the consubstantial love which constitutes the divine life of the Trinity.<sup>105</sup>

The pain of the cross determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity.<sup>106</sup>

What happens on Golgotha reaches into the very depths of the Godhead and therefore puts its impress on the trinitarian life of God in eternity.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *FC*, p.76.

<sup>105</sup> *TKG*, p.168.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161.

<sup>107</sup> *WJC*, p.173.

But the phenomenon that God is constituted in the cross does not necessary imply that God "needs" the history of the world to constitute his being. There may be other reasons that God allows himself to be constituted in the cross. In other words, one cannot deduce reason from fact. One cannot draw the conclusion that God needs the world to realise himself from the fact that God's being is constituted in the historical event of the cross.

Nevertheless, an odd consequence cannot be avoided if the assertion that God is constituted on the cross from eternity to eternity is insisted. As Bauckham rightly says, this makes the actual suffering of the cross essential to who God is from eternity.<sup>108</sup> The suffering on the cross becomes eternal. It follows: "If this does not make evil necessary, then contingent evil not only affects God in the course of his trinitarian history, but essentially determines his inner life from eternity."<sup>109</sup>

#### 5.3.3.2 The Dissolution of the Immanent Trinity in the Economic Trinity

How should one understand Moltmann's affirmation of Rahner's thesis of the identity of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity? Despite Rahner's own theological

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<sup>108</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.109.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

interpretation of this thesis, the crucial point is what Moltmann means by this thesis and how his understanding affects the problem whether God needs the world.

This identity, obviously, does not mean  $A = A$ . When Moltmann identifies God with his trinitarian history, he identifies the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity. But is there any remainder? It seems that Moltmann does not consider there is any nature of God behind his history:

The nature of God then does not stand behind the appearance of history and appearance in history as eternal, ideal being; it is that history itself.<sup>110</sup>

There is no other divine nature behind God's history in the world. What follows from this is that God is dissolved into history. God is God-in-process. This is another version that God realises himself by dissolving himself in the history of the world. In this sense, God needs the world. It should be noted that such a view-point emerges in the context of Moltmann's discussion of the relationship of the cross to God's nature.

However, he does not intend to dissolve God into world history.<sup>111</sup> In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann distinguishes God's inner trinitarian process from the world process.<sup>112</sup> He refuses to identify the eternal life

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<sup>110</sup> FC, p.74.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>112</sup> TKG, p.107.

of God himself with the world process and vice versa.<sup>113</sup> For Moltmann, "what is Other in confrontation with God is not identified with the otherness of God".<sup>114</sup> The world as other cannot be identified with the Son as the otherness of the Father within the divine life. Ultimately Moltmann intends to maintain a certain kind of Christian panentheism which does not take the history of mankind as a history of God but as a history in God.<sup>115</sup>

In this context, although Moltmann affirms Rahner's thesis of the identity of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, he interprets "the connection not as absolute identity without distinction but as reciprocity and interdependence".<sup>116</sup> In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, Moltmann clarifies what he means by identifying the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity:

What this thesis is actually trying to bring out is the interaction between the substance and the revelation, the "inwardness" and the "outwardness" of the triune God. The economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity; it also has a retroactive effect on it.<sup>117</sup>

Moltmann rejects the traditional distinction because he does not think that the relationship of the triune God to

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp.106-107.

<sup>116</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*, p.183.

<sup>117</sup> TKG, p.160.

himself and the relationship of the triune God to the world is to be understood as a one way relationship.<sup>118</sup> He argues that the traditional distinction, according to which the economic Trinity merely "reflects" or "reveals" the immanent Trinity, does indeed separate them too much.<sup>119</sup> However, he does not propose that the one way relationship of the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity should be reversed as the one way relationship of the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. Rather, the correct relationship should be one of interaction.

Moltmann emphasises that this mutual relationship does not mean to "equate God's relationship to the world with his relationship to himself".<sup>120</sup> By this mutual relationship of interaction Moltmann perceives the distinction while holding them firmly together.<sup>121</sup> What he is concerned with is that "God's relationship to the world has a retroactive effect on his relationship to himself".<sup>122</sup> He still considers that "the divine

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg", p.217.

<sup>120</sup> TKG, p.161.

<sup>121</sup> Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg", p.217.

<sup>122</sup> TKG, p.161.

relationship to the world is primarily determined by that inner relationship".<sup>123</sup>

In this way, one cannot charge Moltmann with the dissolution of God in world history. But this does not necessary mean that God does not need the world. This is because the primary determination of God's inner life to his act in world history may be not a free one. God may be compulsorily determined going out of himself so as to be affected by the world. Hence, a further clarification of the meaning of this primary determination of God's immanence to his economic act is necessary.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

For Moltmann, in the dialectical Christ event, both God's history and the history of the world are interwoven with each other. They are inseparable from one another. Because this dialectical event is both soteriological and theological, Moltmann finds that a revolution in the concept of God is required. The trinitarian history of God in the cross event is not the moving image of eternity. The case that God's inner life is affected by his outer act attracts the charge of Hegelianism.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

Since Moltmann distinguishes himself from Hegel in the understanding of other, the charge of synthesis of God and the world in a higher identity is not justified. However, his notions of God's self-constitution in the cross and the elimination of the traditional distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity can be comprehended as God's own realisation in world history. Although such an view-point is not necessarily the only possible interpretation, it cannot be excluded. In order to avoid such an understanding of God's economic act in the world, Moltmann further develops his doctrine of God, especially the relationship of God to the world. This is going to be discussed in the next chapter.



## 6 God as Love, and God's Self-Limitation and Self-De- Limitation

### 6.1 The Primary Determination

Moltmann finds that in the cross event God's inner life is affected by his external act in the world. Accordingly, he claims that the traditional doctrine of Trinity cannot be held for its one way relationship any more. Rather, God's inner life and his outer act mutually affect one another. That is, their relationship is two way, not one way. Furthermore, Moltmann considers that God's inner trinitarian being has the primacy in this reciprocal determination.<sup>1</sup>

However, unfortunately, Moltmann does not further explicate the meaning of this primary determination

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<sup>1</sup> TKG, p.161.

The fact that Moltmann does not explicitly discuss the primary determination does not mean that he does not leave any clue and trace for reconstructing its meaning. The resources can be found in his talking of the open Trinity and in the thesis that God is love. Actually, these are two prior crucial steps for Moltmann's full development of the notion of the dialectical trinitarian history of God.

When Moltmann reaches the primary determination of the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity, he touches the ontological condition of the initiation of God's history. In the Christ event God reveals to the world that God has a history and the relationship of such a history to world history. God's revelation in the Christ event itself is his history in the world. Hence, epistemologically speaking, God's history emerges in the context of his revealing the future of the world in the promise event of the cross and the resurrection.

Correspondingly, how is God's history which emerges in the Christ event possible? What is God's being that allows himself to be deeply affected in his history with the world? In trinitarian terms, what is God's immanent Trinity that allows himself to be affected in his economic Trinity? These are questions about the ontological condition that does not merely make God's history possible but also allows God's history to have a retroactive effect on his inner being. It is this ontological condition which determines

how the immanent Trinity determines the economic Trinity. Or to put it in another way, because this primary determination is out of the being of the triune God, it is necessary to ask further what this triune God is so that he makes such a primary determination. Then, this primary determination cannot be understood apart from God's being. In Moltmann's case, the clarification of this primary determination is very significant as to whether God's history in the world is a kind of self-realization. However, this is possible only when the ontological condition is clarified first.

As a matter of fact, Moltmann's talking of the open Trinity and God as love is about the ontological condition which determines God's trinitarian involvement in the world. This chapter is divided into two main parts. In the first part the ontological condition, that is, the open Trinity and God as love, will be analysed. Based on this, in the second part, the trinitarian history of God will be fully examined.

## 6.2 The Open Trinity

### 6.2.1 Approach to the Open Trinity

According to Moltmann's theological method, the knowledge about God cannot be deduced and asserted by

speculation. It has to be revealed in God's concrete act in the history of the world. To put it particularly, speaking of God must not be done apart from the history of God in the concrete Christ event. Since *Theology of Hope* on Moltmann has rejected the theological approaches which start with universal concept of God.<sup>2</sup> His theological method is one that moves from the particular, the history of Jesus, to the universal, the being of God.

Consistently with Moltmann's methodology, then, one cannot directly enter into the discussion of the thesis that God is love and the way that God as love determines his outer act. On the contrary, one has to start from God's act in the Christ event. However, epistemologically, Moltmann does not follow the traditional method of deducing the actor from the act and the master from the work.<sup>3</sup> This is because such a method inclines one to view that the act is accidental to the actor. The act does not have any influence on the actor. In other words, it sees the relationship between the actor and the act as one way, not two way. This is precisely different from Moltmann's theological analysis of the Christ event that the relationship between God's inner life and his outer act is reciprocal.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.59.

<sup>3</sup> TKG, p.98.

This reciprocal relationship does not allow one to understand God's being in terms of the actor or master model. It even forces one to give up the traditional doctrine of the Trinity and replace it with another proper one that this reciprocal relationship is determined from the very beginning.

Moltmann's main concern is the open Trinity when he repudiates the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. It is clear that God as the triune one opens himself to be affected in the cross event. Then, does the triune God open himself to the world only on the cross? If so, then God's opening of himself is not necessarily out of his inner being. That is, the Trinity is not necessarily open to the world and to the future from eternity, from the very beginning. In this way, God's history in the world would be fortuitous.

Moltmann's strategy of inferring that the Trinity is open from eternity is simple. He questions back "from the starting-point of the history of God on the cross into the conditions of possibility for that history in God".<sup>4</sup> This inference consists of two steps. Firstly, he has to infer from the cross event to the starting-point of the history of God on the cross. And then, he has to infer from this starting-point to the God who makes this history possible.

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<sup>4</sup> *FC*, p.74.

In view of the traditional Christian doctrine of God, this seems to be an inference from the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. However, Moltmann does not understand these terms in the traditional senses.<sup>5</sup> He even replaces these terms with the Trinity in the sending and the Trinity in the origin respectively.<sup>6</sup> Then, the inference is one which proceeds from the sending to the origin. By doing so, Moltmann intends to preserve God's open character which is revealed in the cross event in the Trinity in the sending and in the Trinity in the origin.

Then, Moltmann's inference from the Trinity in the historical sending to the Trinity in the eternal origin has two functions. Firstly, it ensures that God's act in the cross event has to do with God himself. Secondly, it shows that the Trinity is not merely open in its act in the world but open from eternity.<sup>7</sup>

#### 6.2.2 From the Trinity in the Sending to the Trinity in the Origin

Doubtless, the cross of Christ on Golgotha gives content to trinitarian talk about God. But in Moltmann's

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.111.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.125-126.

<sup>7</sup> *FC*, p.85; *CPS*, p.55.

view, "this does not mean the cross as the isolated fact".<sup>8</sup> The cross has its beginning and ending. Christ's death is but the centre and quintessence of God's whole history for the world.<sup>9</sup> It begins with Jesus' messianic sending and will be completed with his eschatological glorification.<sup>10</sup>

Then, how can the history of Jesus have to do with God himself? In Moltmann's wording: "Is the mission of Jesus a fortuitous historical event, or does it have its foundation in God himself?"<sup>11</sup> At this point Moltmann touches the relationship of God's inner life to his outer act, or the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity.

Moltmann clearly says that "the event of the *derelictio Jesu* can lead us to the eternal *generatio filii*".<sup>12</sup> As R. Bauckham paraphrases this, "'the eternal *generatio filii*' could be the prior condition in God for the *derelictio Jesu* on the cross, so that God's history has a trinitarian origin before the cross, just as it has a trinitarian goal at the *eschaton*".<sup>13</sup> Obviously, the origin and the *eschaton* correspond to the sending and the glorification

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<sup>8</sup> FC, p.81.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>13</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.108. Cf. FC, pp.74-75.

respectively. Between the origin and the goal is the dialectical trinitarian history of God.<sup>14</sup> The sending has its origin.

Then, the question is: How can one directly infer from the sending to the origin? That is, according to what principle can one move from the historical relationships of Jesus to the Father, of the Father to the Son, and their fellowship in the Holy Spirit, to the pre-existent relationships in God himself? This is possible only when there is nothing different in God that precedes his sending and in which this sending is not already inherent.<sup>15</sup> In other words, in Bauckham's words, the "economic relationship between persons correspond to relations in eternity".<sup>16</sup> Only in this case can Moltmann write: "The *missio ad extra* reveals the *missio ad intra*."<sup>17</sup>

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, Moltmann further explains the reason on which the correspondence between the economic relationship and the relations in eternity is based. It is very simple: There are not two different Trinities.<sup>18</sup> Moltmann writes:

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<sup>14</sup> FC, p.92.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>16</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.111. Cf. FC, pp.83-84; CPS, pp.54-55.

<sup>17</sup> FC, p.84; CPS, p.54.

<sup>18</sup> TKG, p.153.



The triune God can only appear in history as he is in himself, and in no other way. He is in himself as he appears in salvation history, for it is he himself who is manifested, and he is just what he is manifested as being.<sup>19</sup>

The God who appears in history is not different from the God in himself. In this vein, Moltmann goes on:

Consequently we cannot find any trinitarian relationships in salvation history which do not have their foundation in the nature of the triune God, corresponding to him himself. It is impossible to say, for example, that in history the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father 'and from the Son', but what within the Trinity he proceeds 'from the Father alone'.<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, the trinitarian relationships in salvation history must correspond to those in God himself. They have their foundation in the nature of the triune God. "The *missio ad intra* is the foundation of the *missio ad extra*."<sup>21</sup>

In this way, what is inferred from the open Trinity revealed in the cross event and the sending is that the Trinity from eternity is an open one: "It is open for its own sending ... It is open for man and for all creation. The life of God within the Trinity cannot be conceived of as a closed circle - the symbol of perfection and self-sufficiency ... The triune God is the God who is open to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp.153-154.

<sup>21</sup> *FC*, p.84; *CPS*, p.54.

man, open to the world and open to time."<sup>22</sup> From eternity God is open for affecting the history of the world and being affected by the world as well.

In other words, the triune God is open in his nature. Then, a question arises: Does this mean that the triune God is deficient in his being so that he has to open himself to the world and time? Is this opening out of a deficiency of God's being? If this is so, then God's history in the world is the process of his own realization. That is, God "needs" the world in order to realise himself. Why does God from the very beginning open himself to the world and time? For Moltmann, the answer is: God is love.

### 6.3 God is Love

#### 6.3.1 The Greek View of Love

In Moltmann's view, the open nature manifested in the sending can "be summed up as the love of God issuing from itself".<sup>23</sup> Moltmann understands God's open nature as the love of God. That is, out of his love God opens himself.

However, the love Moltmann talks about is not the kind of the Greek understanding. What the Greeks understand by

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<sup>22</sup> *CPS*, pp.55-56.

<sup>23</sup> *FC*, p.85.

God's love is his benevolent will and activity to the world.<sup>24</sup> As Bauckham points out, "it cannot involve a two-way relationship in which God can be *affected* by the objects of his love."<sup>25</sup> This kind of love is precisely what Moltmann criticizes. In Moltmann's view, it has two problems. Firstly, it presupposes that God is self-sufficient and perfect. Secondly, it makes God's freedom be the first but his love be the second. And these two problems are inter-related.

The Greek concept of God as love is conditioned by its understanding of God as self-sufficient and perfect. To put it simply, for the Greeks, God must be *apathetic* and cannot be affected by anything else. *Pathos*, in the sense of either suffering or passion, is the mark of weakness. If God suffers or is moved by emotions, then he is not self-sufficient. He is not a self-determining being. This is connected with the thought of passivity.<sup>26</sup> But this does not mean that God can participate in the suffering actively, because suffering and emotion are connected with change. The Greeks consider that any change, either out of one's will or imposed on one from outside, could only be change for the worse. At any rate, change means imperfection.

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<sup>24</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.103.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.102.

Therefore: "As *actus purus* ... nothing can happen to God for him to suffer. As the perfect being, he is without emotion."<sup>27</sup> "Since he is self-sufficient, he cannot be changed. Since he is perfect, he cannot change."<sup>28</sup> In this way, God's love must not be understood as *pathos*. It is impossible to think of God's love in terms of his opening to the world and time. The influence of this thinking on Christian theology can be seen in the fact noted by Moltmann: "What Christianity proclaimed as the *agape* of God and the believer was rarely translated as *pathos*."<sup>29</sup>

Then, what is this love? Moltmann points out that this love "arises from the spirit and from freedom".<sup>30</sup> Actually, the Greek concept of God as a self-sufficient and perfect being is ultimately an absolutely free God. The former two characteristics finally point to the absolute freedom of God which is in turn expressed in terms of *apatheia*. The apathetic God is the free God and vice versa. In this context, love derives from liberation from inward and outward conditions.<sup>31</sup> And *apatheia* is taken up as "an enabling ground for this love and be filled with it".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> CG, p.268.

<sup>28</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.102.

<sup>29</sup> CG, p.269.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Two theological consequences follow. Firstly, God's love for this world is his charitable will and activity. He does not need to love this world because he is absolutely free from this world. The reason that God loves is not that he is moved by the object he loves. He loves because he is free to do so. This precisely makes God's love benevolent in nature which is very abstract from the concrete situation of the suffering world. This leads to the second point. Such a love is secondary to God's absolute freedom. Freedom as the essence of God is incomparable with God's act of love. The latter is out of the former without any necessity. That is, God is free to love or not to love. He does not necessarily love.

A metaphysical principle of analogy is inherent in this view of freedom and love. The Greek view of freedom is a kind of autonomous freedom which is in contrast to freedom in community.<sup>33</sup> Autonomous freedom manifests itself in self-determination, independence, self-sufficiency. In this sense, if God is free, then he is free for himself but not for the other. His freedom is a kind of self-related freedom. As like is known by like, like is freed by like. Likewise, like is loved by like. God's love is essentially self-related. His love for the world is but fortuitous. Although God loves the world, he is not open himself to be affected by the world. The inner being of the triune God is closed and distant from the suffering world.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibid., p.56.

Obviously, a different understanding of God's love is required. In Moltmann's view, God's love must be understood as *pathos*, on the one hand; and his love and his freedom are inseparable from each other, on the other hand. These two points are precisely against the underlying axioms which dominate the Greek understanding of love: apathetic and free from any necessity.

### 6.3.2 Barth's View of Love

Barth's understanding of God's love, like the Greek formally, is subject to his conception of God's freedom. Doubtless to say, the freedom of God is crucially important for Barth in his doctrine of God.<sup>34</sup> As G.S. Hendry says, it "is a basic constituent of the being of God, and it plays a central part in the systematic connection between the being of God and his acts, as that is developed in the doctrine of election".<sup>35</sup> However, it is firstly developed in Barth's discussion of the revelation of God along with the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> C.E. Gunton, *Being and Becoming: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.133; T. Bradshaw, "Karl Barth on the Trinity: A Family Resemblance", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39/2 (1986), p.146; G.S. Hendry, "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31/3 (1978), p.229.

<sup>35</sup> Hendry, "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth", p.229.

<sup>36</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), §8, pp.295-347.

"God reveals Himself as the Lord."<sup>37</sup> For Barth, this is the basic axiom of revelation.<sup>38</sup> "Lordship is present in revelation because its reality and truth are so fully self-grounded, because it does not need any other actualisation of validation than that of its actual occurrence, because it is revelation through itself and not in relation to something else ..."<sup>39</sup> That is, either form or agent or content of God's self-revelation is the expression of his lordship. Therefore in the event of his self-interpretation, God reveals himself as revealer, revelation and revealedness. As E. Jüngel points out, "in these capacities God reveals himself at the same time as he who can reveal himself, i.e. as the Lord".<sup>40</sup> In his self-revelation God reveals that God himself is the only grounding of his own revelation. This is precisely the meaning when Barth writes: "That God reveals Himself as the Lord means that He reveals what only He can reveal, Himself."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, pp.306, 314, 324, 332.

<sup>38</sup> E. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is Becoming*, trans. Scottish Academic Press (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p.21.

<sup>39</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.302.

<sup>40</sup> Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming*, p.21. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.316.

<sup>41</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.307.

In this sense, God's self-revelation is his self-interpretation:<sup>42</sup> "in revelation God interprets himself as the one who he is".<sup>43</sup> Revelation "is the statement of God's autonomy, that he is a self-subsistent 'I', addressing man as 'Thou', and in so doing displaying his absolute independence of us, and thus his lordship ... over us."<sup>44</sup> "Lordship means freedom",<sup>45</sup> "ontic and noetic autonomy",<sup>46</sup> Either in himself or in his self-revelation God is free. God is free to reveal himself because "the very being of God is a being in freedom".<sup>47</sup> "He is the ground without ground."<sup>48</sup>

God's freedom manifested in his self-revelation as Lord, then, is both negative and positive. The free God is unconstrained and self-grounded.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, God's freedom is the absence of limits, restrictions, or

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.311.

<sup>43</sup> Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming*, p.21.

<sup>44</sup> R.D. Williams, "Barth on the Triune God" in *Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p.159. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.307.

<sup>45</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.306.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.307.

<sup>47</sup> Hendry, "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth", p.231.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Bradshaw, "Karl Barth on the Trinity: A Family Resemblance", p.146.



conditions from outside.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, his freedom is the probative of divine sovereignty, the independence of everything that is not he.<sup>51</sup> "In this freedom of His, God is also unlimited, unrestricted and unconditioned from without."<sup>52</sup> This meaning of God's freedom can be further explicated in the concrete event of God's self-revelation within the immanent Trinity.

God's self-revelation is an event of "a self-distinction of God from himself, a being of God in a mode of being that is different from though not subordinate to His first and hidden mode of being as God".<sup>53</sup> "The very fact of revelation tells us that it is proper to Him to distinguish Himself from Himself, i.e., to be God in Himself and in concealment, and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., to be God a second time in the form of something he himself is not":<sup>54</sup> God the Son.

On the one hand, "God in the form He assumes when He reveals Himself God is free to reveal Himself or not to

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<sup>50</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, trans. T.H.L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, H. Knight and J.L.M. Haire (Edinburgh, T.& T. Clark, 1957), p.301.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.316.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

reveal Himself".<sup>55</sup> "The fact that God takes form means that God Himself controls ... the form in which He encounters man."<sup>56</sup> That is, as Jüngel says: "The God who can reveal himself is not *obliged* to reveal himself."<sup>57</sup> Therefore, "God's self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom."<sup>58</sup> "God as the subject of revelation remains distinguished from revelation."<sup>59</sup> It is precisely in this way that God reveals himself "as the Father of the Son in whom he takes form for our sake".<sup>60</sup> In the Father's veiledness and mystery God is free.

On the other hand, by nature God cannot be unveiled to men,<sup>61</sup> but he transcends his own hiddenness<sup>62</sup> by unveiling himself through his own *alter ego*. In "revealing himself under an alien form, 'something He is not', he shows himself to be capable of self-differentiation".<sup>63</sup> "He differentiates Himself from Himself, being not only God the Father but also ... God the Son."<sup>64</sup> For Barth, the fact

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.321.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p.19.

<sup>58</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.321.

<sup>59</sup> Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p.19.

<sup>60</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.324.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.315.

<sup>62</sup> Williams, "Barth on the Triune God", p.160.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.320.

that "God Himself becomes Another in the person of His Son"<sup>65</sup> "consists in the freedom of God to differentiate Himself from Himself, to become unlike himself".<sup>66</sup> In other words, God is free to have "otherness in Himself from eternity to eternity".<sup>67</sup>

In this way, God's freedom does not primarily derive from the mode of his relationship to the world. The freedom of God "is primarily and fundamentally defined as God's freedom in Himself".<sup>68</sup> This "freedom in its positive and proper qualities means to be grounded in one's own being, to be determined and moved by oneself."<sup>69</sup> G.S. Hendry classifies this positive freedom as self-determination: "This is the freedom to determine what one shall be and do of one's own 'free will' and not under external constraint."<sup>70</sup> This kind of freedom is seen in the hiddenness of the Father in God's self-unveiling in the form of the Son.

According to Barth, in the exercise of this self-determinative freedom, God can enter into a real

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<sup>65</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, p.317.

<sup>66</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p.320.

<sup>67</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, p.317.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.309.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.301.

<sup>70</sup> Hendry, "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth", p.234.

relationship with that which is other than himself.<sup>71</sup> However, this freedom of communion with the other has its original truth in God himself.<sup>72</sup> That is, in eternity God becomes another in the Son so that he has otherness in himself from the very beginning.<sup>73</sup> This is precisely the event that God's self-distinction happens in his self-unveiling in the form of the Son. In this way, Barth writes: "The existence of the world is not needed in order that there should be otherness for Him."<sup>74</sup> The world exists because God elects to communicate with it through the election of the Son. Then, God's freedom of communion with the other means that God can go out of himself to have relationship with the other but he need not to do so. That is, he is not obliged to enter into such a relationship, just as it is the case that he is not obliged to reveal himself.

To sum it up, for Barth, as freedom in himself, God's freedom is primarily understood as self-grounded and unconstrained. His freedom of communion with the other, then, is freedom in the sense that he can but he is not obliged. In this way, before God communicates himself to the other, he has to make a decision firstly. Then, freedom

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<sup>71</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, p.309.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.317.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

as choice of act or not becomes a necessary precondition when God does enter into fellowship with the other.

However, this kind of understanding of freedom is different from that of Greek. The Greek views God's freedom as being free from any external or internal condition because God is self-sufficient and perfect. God's self-determinative nature must be grasped in this sense. Then, either passively or actively God is not allowed to enter into communion with the other. At this point Barth differs from the Greeks. When God's freedom is primarily understood as the freedom in himself, he, certainly, is unconstrained from any external factor. But this does not mean that he is limited from being conditioned by such external factor. Because he himself is freedom, he can transcend this limitation as well. Otherwise he is not absolutely free. The crucial point of the difference between the Greeks and Barth on God's freedom lies in that the former views God's freedom from the mode of God's relationship to the world while the latter views it from God himself. Consequently, these are two different kinds of freedom: relative freedom and absolute freedom.

However, for Moltmann, Barth's problem lies in the introduction of freedom as choice of act or not into the discussion of God's fellowship with the other. This further affects Barth's understanding of God's love. He writes:

"His loving is ... utterly free, grounded in itself, needing no other, and yet also not lacking in another, but in sovereign transcendence giving, communicating itself to the other. In this freedom it is the divine loving. But we must also say, conversely, that only in this divine loving is the freedom described by us divine freedom."<sup>75</sup>

"God's love would not really be divine love unless it were free."<sup>76</sup> God is love but he does not need the other to love. "God would be love even if there were no men around for Him to love."<sup>77</sup> He loves the other only when he determines solely on his own to love the other. This meaning is very clear in the following passage:

"God in his love elects another to fellowship with himself. First and foremost this means that God makes a self-election in favour of this other. He ordains that He should not be entirely self-sufficient as He might be. He determines for Himself, that overflowing, that movement, that condescension."<sup>78</sup>

When God freely determines to love the other, neither his love nor freedom is limited by the other. As C.E. Gunton writes, "it is the trinitarian grounding of the divine freedom that enables Barth to conceive as a unity the acts of love and freedom in which God relates himself to what is not himself, and yet in doing so remain free".<sup>79</sup> Barth

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.321.

<sup>76</sup> J.D. Bettis, "Is Karl Barth a Universalist?", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20/4 (1967), p.428.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, trans. G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, I. Wilson, J.S. McNab, H. Knight and R.A. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p.10.

<sup>79</sup> Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, p.198.

considers that God's loving cannot be separated from his exercise of freedom and vice versa. When God determines, he determines to love the other. When God loves the other, he is free to do so. However, such an understanding of God's freedom as choice has problems.

In the section "God's Freedom" of *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann criticizes such a view-point on God's freedom and love.<sup>80</sup> Simply, a contradiction within God's nature in eternity emerges. The crucial point lies in that God's decision of will to love carries time's "beforehand - afterwards" structure into the divine eternity.<sup>81</sup> Then, there are two different divine natures. One is before the decision and the other is after the decision.<sup>82</sup> The problem is that these two divine natures are not complementary to one another; rather they contradict each other. Moltmann clearly points out: "describing his nature before his self-determination, we would have to say that God is in himself blessed and self-sufficient; whereas describing his nature afterwards, we would have to say that God is love - he chooses man - he is not self-sufficient".<sup>83</sup> God does not correspond entirely to himself.

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<sup>80</sup> *TKG*, pp.52-56.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53. Cf. *GC*, p.82.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.53-54.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54. Cf. *GC*, p.82.

### 6.3.3 Moltmann's View of Love

For Moltmann, the polarity between freedom and necessity is not real in God.<sup>84</sup> The emergence of such a contrast is not accidental. This is because this kind of freedom is understood in terms of freedom from any internal and external condition. It is expressed concretely in the notion of freedom as arbitrary choice, "a type of freedom itself often exhibiting the structure of the master-slave relationship".<sup>85</sup> Moltmann does not agree with this view of God's freedom.

Moltmann criticizes this nominalist doctrine of decree<sup>86</sup> as the *formalistic* concept of liberty.<sup>87</sup> It is formalistic because it excludes not merely the external necessity but the internal necessity as well. If God's freedom is grasped in this sense, then God is even free from his own being. A freedom involving no necessity, in Hegel's view, is abstract.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, Moltmann says: "without the substantial notion of freedom, freedom of

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<sup>84</sup> FC, p.77.

<sup>85</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", *Heythrop Journal* 23/2 (1982), p.164. Cf. TKG, pp.54, 56.

<sup>86</sup> TKG, p.52.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.54.

<sup>88</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science (1830)*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), §35, p.55.



choice is an empty concept."<sup>89</sup> Speaking strictly, such an indeterminate freedom cannot determine anything because it cannot justify any determination out of itself.

Therefore, Moltmann calls for a material concept of God's freedom.<sup>90</sup> He refers to Baron Friedrich von Hügel that freedom of choice is by no means freedom's highest stage:<sup>91</sup> "Liberty exists in various kinds, and the Perfect kind - Perfect Liberty - excludes Choice."<sup>92</sup> He further points out that "the freedom of having to choose between good and evil is less than the freedom of desiring the good and performing it".<sup>93</sup> The reason is that "the person who chooses has the torment of choice".<sup>94</sup> On the contrary, "the person who is truly free no longer has to choose".<sup>95</sup> This is because whatever he does is good. How can this be possible? This is possible only when freedom is understood as love. Moltmann writes:

Freedom arrives at its divine truth through love. Love is self-evident, unquestionable 'overflowing of goodness' which is therefore never open to choice at

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<sup>89</sup> GC, p.82.

<sup>90</sup> TKG, p.54.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>92</sup> Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses in the Philosophy of Religion*, Second Series (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1930), p.202.

<sup>93</sup> TKG, p.55. Cf. DGG, p.173.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

any time. We have to understand true freedom as being the self-communication of the good.<sup>96</sup>

In a word, "in the substantial sense the truth of freedom is love"<sup>97</sup> which "is the self-communication of the good".<sup>98</sup> God's freedom is no longer arbitrary choice but his love, the inner necessity of his being. God's freedom is the freedom of the good which overflows itself.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, God's freedom must not be comprehended apart from his love. Obviously, Moltmann critically inherits Barth's conception of the inseparability of God's freedom and love but abandons his understanding of God's freedom as choice.

However, according to Moltmann, love as the overflowing of God's goodness is not a natural event. That is, God's overflowing of his goodness to the other is not an event without his own determination. Rather, God's free self-determination belongs to his essential nature.<sup>100</sup> But this self-determination is at the same time the overflowing of God's goodness.<sup>101</sup> Moltmann considers that the origin of God's love must have these two sides because it is "only when we see both sides that God's self-determination ceases

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> GC, p.82.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", p.164.

<sup>100</sup> TKG, p.54.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

to be something arbitrary, and the overflowing of his goodness ceases to be a natural event".<sup>102</sup> In this vein, God's *decision* is a *disclosure* of himself.<sup>103</sup> God's love is his liberty and God's liberty is his love.<sup>104</sup> That is, God's "self-communication of the good can only take place in freedom".<sup>105</sup> It is in this sense that "freedom and love are synonymous".<sup>106</sup>

In contrast to Barth, Moltmann considers that "God is not entirely free when he can do and leave undone what he likes; he is entirely free when he is entirely himself".<sup>107</sup> This is because "if we start from the Creator himself, the self-communication of his goodness in love to his creation is not a matter of his free will".<sup>108</sup>

It is the self-evident operation of his eternal nature. The essential activity of God is the eternal resolve of his will, and the eternal resolve of his will is his essential activity.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.151.

<sup>105</sup> GC, p.82.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp.82-83.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

In God's love necessity and freedom coincide.<sup>110</sup> In this way, there is not any contrast between necessity and freedom in God's relationship to the world from the very beginning.

If God's love is understood as the overflowing of his goodness, then God "neither will nor can be without the one who is beloved".<sup>111</sup> As Moltmann quotes Pseudo-Dionysius' wording: "Love does not permit the lover to rest in himself. It draws him out of himself, so that he may be entirely in the beloved."<sup>112</sup> This love cannot be limited within God's inner life. It drives the lover to go out of himself. Therefore, the beloved object is not limited within the triune God. Otherwise, the Trinity will become a circle closed to the other<sup>113</sup> and this is against the going out nature of love.

For Moltmann, although within the Trinity the Son is other than the Father, he is not other in essence.<sup>114</sup> The inner-trinitarian love is merely the love of like for like, but not the love of the other.<sup>115</sup> However, God has to communicate his love to the other who is essentially

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. *TKG*, p.107.

<sup>111</sup> *TKG*, p.58. .

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *FC*, p.78.

<sup>114</sup> *TKG*, p.58.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

different from him. He does not merely love "the Other in the like" but also loves "the like in the Other".<sup>116</sup> Moreover, God has to love "the unlike in the Other" in his history with the world. God's love in the cross is the "creative love for what is different, alien and ugly".<sup>117</sup> God's goodness has to overflow beyond himself to the one other than the triune God, not merely the like in the other but the unlike in the other.

These two kinds of love, love for the like and love for the other which includes like and unlike, to put it simply, are God's necessary love and free love,<sup>118</sup> internal love and external love respectively. However, this distinction is not based on different natures of God's love but different beloved objects. God's love is called necessary and free because the Son necessarily responds to the Father's love while the world responds to God's love in freedom according to their different natures. Likewise, God's love is called internal and external because the beloved are within and without the triune God respectively.

Furthermore, as God's love, this inner-trinitarian love and this extra-trinitarian love are not separated from each other. Rather the former is the foundation of the latter. Because the Father loves the Son, he creates the world.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>117</sup> CG, p.28.

<sup>118</sup> TKG, p.58.

Because the Son loves the Father, he redeems the world. The love for the world expressed in God's creation and redemption is the love of the triune God for each other. Moltmann writes: "Creation is a part of the eternal love affair between the Father and the Son. It springs from the Father's love for the Son and is redeemed by the answering love of the Son for the Father."<sup>119</sup> God's love for the world is simultaneously the interplay of the love of the triune God.

In this way, God's freedom cannot be understood as self-related freedom but other-related freedom, because God's love is ultimately other-related love. The former is a kind of freedom which seeks to be free from any external compulsion and manifests itself in terms of self-determination. The latter is another kind of freedom which is "based on the community of friendship, a relationship grounded in affection and respect".<sup>120</sup> For Moltmann, God's self-determination is not abolished in the freedom in community. When God's freedom is grasped as the self-communication of the good, he is self-determinative as well.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.58.

<sup>120</sup> O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", p.164. Cf. TKG, p.56.

From eternity God's essence as love makes the divine Trinity not a closed circle of perfect being in heaven.<sup>121</sup> God opens himself to the world and time not out of any lack in his own being but from his own interior fullness.<sup>122</sup> He does not need the world to realise himself, but he needs the other for his glorification.<sup>123</sup> And in loving the world God is entirely free because he is entirely himself.<sup>124</sup> "Because his freedom is his love, he is in himself related to the world as the Trinity from eternity open to world history."<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, out of his love the triune God does not merely determine to open himself from eternity, but also determines the way of opening himself at the same time. The determination of opening and the determination of the way of opening are simultaneous. This is because the way of opening is inherent in the nature of the opening for the other.

Since the beloved objects are different, essentially alike and essentially different, God cannot love the latter

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<sup>121</sup> CG, p.255.

<sup>122</sup> O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", p.164. Cf. FC, p.86; CPS, p.56.

<sup>123</sup> O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope*, pp.148-149. Cf. DGG, p.155.

<sup>124</sup> TKG, p.55.

<sup>125</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.109.

in the same way as he loves the former. In other words, the way God loves the other in the like is different from the way he loves the like in the other. If God's love for the other in the like is analogical love, then his love for the like in the other is dialectical love. Apparently, these two are parallel to God's two ways of revelation: analogical and dialectical. God in his love opens himself dialectically. That is, for Moltmann, "from eternity God's essence as love has been not only the love of like for like ... but the dialectical love for his other which is open to the world".<sup>126</sup> This dialectical love is completely and radically manifested when the Son is crucified on the cross for the unlike in the other.

Actually, this dialectical love is in essence passionate love or suffering love. As noted by Bauckham, Moltmann understands love as *passion* in the double sense of *pathos*:<sup>127</sup> passionate devotion (*Leidenschaft*) and suffering (*Leiden*).<sup>128</sup> These two senses are not separable but integrated as "passionate concern which involves vulnerability to suffering".<sup>129</sup> God's passion is "itself the passion for life which is prepared for suffering".<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.103,

<sup>128</sup> OC, p.25.

<sup>129</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.103.

<sup>130</sup> TKG, p.23.



In this sense, as Moltmann emphasises, God's suffering is active suffering. Out of his passionate love God voluntarily lays himself open to another and allows himself to be intimately affected.<sup>131</sup> In other words, God's passionate love requires God himself to enter into a reciprocal relationship with the other in which he is ready to suffer even to the point of sacrificing and giving himself up.

Then, God's suffering in his economic activity in the world does not mean that he is affected by the suffering world passively. God is not subject to suffering fatefully. Rather, from eternity he has determined by himself to love his other dialectically. Therefore, because God is love, God's economic activity can be understood as being determined by his immanent life from the very beginning. Firstly, God's love is communicating love so that he determines to open himself to the world from eternity. Secondly, God's love is passionate love so that he determines to open himself to the world in a dialectical way.

#### 6.4 From the Trinity in the Origin to the Trinity in the Glorification

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

If the Trinity is open in love, then the Trinity will be closed in love. This is because God's love is a dialectical one. The triune God manifests his dialectical love in a dialectical way. Therefore, one cannot talk of the opening of God's trinitarian being in the origin without mentioning his closure at the end.

Inferring from the cross event through the Trinity in the historical sending back to the Trinity in the eternal origin, Moltmann reaches the point that the triune God is open from the very beginning. However, since the cross is not separable from the resurrection in the dialectical identity of Jesus Christ, one cannot neglect the eschatological Trinity at the *eschaton* which is promised in Christ's resurrection. God's history with the world does not merely have a trinitarian origin, but also has a trinitarian goal at the *eschaton*. God's opening in the origin is not without goal. When this goal is fulfilled, the Trinity is closed. Then, the Trinity is not open forever without ending. It has its moment of being closed.

From the Trinity in the origin through the Trinity with the history of this world to the Trinity in the goal, God experiences a dialectical process: self-limitation and self-de-limitation. Because of this dialectic, the eschatological Trinity will not be the same as the Trinity in the origin. The trinitarian goal at the *eschaton* is not the repetition of the trinitarian origin.

To put it simply, on the one hand, the triune God limits himself so as to become historical in his involvement with his creation; on the other hand, he has to de-limit himself so as to gather all men and women and indeed the whole creation into God. Or to put it in another way, the Trinity is open by limiting God himself whereas the Trinity is closed by de-limiting God himself.

These two divine movements are God's seeking love and his gathering love respectively.<sup>132</sup> When God's work of gathering love is completed, God will be fully glorified. Moltmann calls this goal "the Trinity in the glorification".<sup>133</sup> Bauckham points out: "'Glory' is the biblical term for the divine splendour in which the whole creation will participate in the End".<sup>134</sup> Then, a genuine panentheism will take place. God will be all in all.<sup>135</sup>

However, the triune God will be all in all only when he has involved himself in a dialectical process which is eschatologically oriented. And this is so because God is love. Out of his dialectical love God acts dialectically.

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<sup>132</sup> O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", p.164; Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.112. Cf. *FC*, p.95.

<sup>133</sup> *FC*, p.88.

<sup>134</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.112.

<sup>135</sup> O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", p.165.

Only in this way is God's love fully manifested. In the following sections this process will be analysed in detail.

## 6.5 God's Self-Limitation and Self-De-Limitation

Moltmann writes: "Between the Trinity in its origins before time and the eschatological Trinity at the end of time lies the whole history of God's dealings with man and creation."<sup>136</sup> Then the divine life can be divided into three different stages: the Trinity before time, the history of the triune God with the creation, the Trinity at the *eschaton*. Although Moltmann does not express the connection of these three stages in terms of dialectic in any sense, within his theology such an understanding of the divine life is not without basis. The proceeding of these three stages can be expressed in terms of God's initial self-limitation in the creation, the climax of his self-limitation and the beginning of his self-de-limitation in the Christ event, the ultimate self-de-limitation at the *eschaton*.

### 6.5.1 God's Initial Self-Limitation in the Primordial

Moment

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<sup>136</sup> *FC*, p.92.

God is a creative God.<sup>137</sup> However, God's creation must be understood as a trinitarian interplay of God's love. According to Moltmann, it is because the Father loves the Son that he becomes the creator.<sup>138</sup> This means that the Father creates the world by virtue of his love for the Son.<sup>139</sup> His love for the Son is not merely limited within the Trinity but overflows to the one who is other than the triune God. God's inner-trinitarian love is not merely a kind of self-related love, it is also a kind of other-related love. In this sense, Moltmann claims that "the idea of the world is already inherent in the Father's love for the Son".<sup>140</sup>

Therefore, creation is a fruit of the triune God's love for his other. However, the process of creation is not simply an outward act. The problem is: "can the omnipotent and omnipresent God have an 'outward' aspect at all?"<sup>141</sup> In eternity God's power and presence are all in all. There is nothing other than God which can co-exist with God. There is nothing non-divine outside God. There is no room for this non-divine entity outside God. Therefore, Moltmann comes to the point that "in order to create something

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<sup>137</sup> *TKG*, p.106.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112; cf. p.108.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

'outside' himself, the infinite God must have made room for this finitude beforehand, 'in himself'".<sup>142</sup>

Moltmann employs Isaac Luria's kabbalistic doctrine of *zimsum* (self-limitation)<sup>143</sup> to assist him in developing this aspect. The doctrine of *zimsum* is developed from the ancient Jewish doctrine of Shekinah (God's indwelling), "according to which the infinite God can so contract his presence that he dwells in the temple".<sup>144</sup> Luria transforms this into "the doctrine of God's concentrated inversion for the purpose of creating the world".<sup>145</sup> Consequently,

The existence of a world outside God is made possible by an inversion of God. This sets free a kind of "mystical primordial space" into which God - issuing out of himself <sup>146</sup> can enter and in which he can manifest himself.

Therefore, the very first act of God is "not a step 'outwards' but a step 'inwards', a 'self-withdrawal of God from himself into himself' ... a limitation on God's part, not a de-limitation".<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p.109.

<sup>143</sup> For an account of Isaac Luria's theology see G.G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954), pp.244-286.

<sup>144</sup> GC, p.87.

<sup>145</sup> TKG, p.109.

<sup>146</sup> GC, p.87.

<sup>147</sup> TKG, p.110.

God's self-limitation is not an inward act of a "single" subject. Rather, it is a trinitarian interplay of God's love. God's primary act of self-withdrawal means that

the Father, through an alteration of his love for the son (that is to say through a contraction of the Spirit), and the Son, through an alteration in his response to the Father's love (that is, through an inversion of the Spirit) have opened up the space, the time and the freedom ...<sup>148</sup>

Because the Father's love for the Son and the Son's responsive love for the Father overflow beyond themselves, a space has to emerge through the contraction and inversion of the Spirit so that God's beloved who is other than God can be created.

Here one thing has to be noted. This primal, mystical space is not merely one in which God calls forth the non-divine created world,<sup>149</sup> but also the ceded space that God yields up for creation's own being.<sup>150</sup> In other words, it is not merely a space for God's act of creation, but also one for the existence of creation's own being. However, this space is not the negation of God in the Hegelian sense. Certainly, it cannot be understood apart from the nature of God's self-limitation in this primordial moment.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>150</sup> GC, p.87.

God's withdrawing his presence and power means that he negates his omnipresence to a certain extent. In other words, God is not all in all any more. It is in this sense that Moltmann calls this self-limitation God's self-negation.<sup>151</sup> Corresponding to God's act of self-negation, then, is the emergence of the primordial space. Because this space is conceded by God's self-negation, it is a godforsaken space, hell, absolute death that is itself a partial negation of the divine being.<sup>152</sup> Hence Moltmann calls it *nihil*, Nothingness.

However, being a godforsaken space, this Nothingness in the primordial moment does not threaten anything yet because before God's creation *ad extra* there is not anything in the primordial space for it to annihilate. Moltmann says to the point: "As a self-limitation that makes creation possible, the *nihil* does not yet have this annihilating character."<sup>153</sup> It is merely a precondition for the existence of God's creation.<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, he admits that "this implies the possibility of the annihilating Nothingness".<sup>155</sup> Moltmann carefully distinguishes three related senses of Nothingness with regard to three different objects: non-being of the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.



creator, non-being of creation, non-being of the creature.<sup>156</sup> These three can be viewed as corresponding to three different stages with creation as the reference: Nothingness before creation in the primordial moment, Nothingness at creation, Nothingness after creation.

Certainly, God's initial self-negation is only partial, not total. Otherwise, God will become nothing. It is only on the cross that God the Son becomes nothing. He totally negates himself unto death. However, in the primordial moment the triune God just withdraws partially so that Nothingness is merely a partial negation of the divine being. It is only on the cross that God the Son's self-negation reaches its climax.

In this way, God himself does not pass into Nothingness in order to create something. That is, God's initial self-limitation cannot be understood in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of Being, Nothing and Becoming. According to Hegel, Being negates itself so as to be its opposite, Nothing whereas Nothing negates itself so as to be its opposite, Being. In these movements, Being and Nothing immediately vanish in their opposite.<sup>157</sup> The mutual passing over of Being and Nothing, then, is Becoming.<sup>158</sup> The

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>157</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp.82-83.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

emergence of Nothingness and creation out of nothing, in Moltmann's doctrine of creation, is not the same case. Although Moltmann names this Nothingness the non-being of God,<sup>159</sup> he does not intend to mean that Nothingness is part of God's being from the very beginning. Rather, in the sense that Nothingness is out of God's withdrawing, it can be said that Nothingness is the non-being of God.

In sum, God and Nothingness are not two sides of the same coin. God does not negate himself so as to be Nothingness. Rather, he withdraws himself so as to let Nothingness emerge.

Accordingly, such an act of God in the primordial moment before creation *ad extra* expresses that "God's self-humiliation does not begin merely with creation, inasmuch as God commits himself to this world: it begins beforehand, and is the presupposition that makes creation possible".<sup>160</sup> God's self-limitation in the primordial moment is the ontological condition for his act of creation. It is under this condition that God's history with the world which begins with creation is possible.

Furthermore, Moltmann asserts that "the initial self-limitation of God ... assumes the glorifying, derestricted

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<sup>159</sup> GC, p.88.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

boundlessness in which the whole creation is transfigured".<sup>161</sup> Obviously, this is to say that God's initial self-limitation points to his ultimate self-de-limitation. The former will be negated by the latter. That is, God's initial withdrawing his presence will be negated by his ultimate derestricting of his glory. Moreover, if the initial self-limitation is for the sake of creating the world, then the ultimate self-de-limitation is for the sake of transfiguring the whole world.

Between God's initial self-limitation and ultimate self-de-limitation is God's history of dealing with his creation. Indeed, this is a process of overcoming Nothingness by God's dialectical history with his creation through which God arrives at his full de-limitation.

#### 6.5.2 God's Self-Limitation in His History with the World

##### 6.5.2.1 God's Self-Limitation through the Spirit's

###### Indwelling

"God withdraws into himself in order to go out of himself."<sup>162</sup> However, God's act of going out of himself is not a simple, direct act of de-limitation. He does not go out of himself to abolish Nothingness immediately so that his power and presence can be derestricted. This is because

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p.89.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.87. Cf. *TKG*, p.111.

creation *ad extra* has to take place in the space conceded by God himself.<sup>163</sup> If Nothingness is abolished immediately, then the world cannot be created out of nothing.

God's creation *ad extra* is an act in which "the Father utters the eternal Word in the Spirit and breathes out the Spirit in the eternal utterance of the Word".<sup>164</sup> On the one hand, the Father creates the world through the Son because he creates the world in his love for the Son.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, the Son is the Logos in relation to the world.<sup>166</sup> He is the ground of the existence of the world. On the other hand, the Father creates the world through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The creation and preservation of the world is impossible without the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit. This is because Nothingness will annul anything, including God's creation, within its sphere.

According to Moltmann, "Christian theology talks about 'God's indwelling' in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit".<sup>167</sup> It is the power of the Holy Spirit in which "the Father, through the Son, has created the world, and preserves it against annihilating Nothingness".<sup>168</sup> The power of the Holy

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp.88-89.

<sup>164</sup> TKG, p.108.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>168</sup> GC, p.96.

Spirit is not only creative but also emanated. This means that "in the Spirit the Creator himself is present in his creation".<sup>169</sup> "Through the presence of his own being, God preserves his creation against the annihilating Nothingness."<sup>170</sup> The creation "would perish if God withdrew his Spirit from it".<sup>171</sup> "If the world were completely and wholly godless and forsaken by the Spirit, it would have become nothing (Ps. 104.29); it would have ceased to exist."<sup>172</sup>

In this way, creation *ad extra* is an act consisting of two simultaneous moments: the calling forth by the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When the world is created, it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. From the very beginning of God's creation out of nothing, the Holy Spirit is present in the creation. His indwelling is God's self-humiliation. "For through his Shekinah God participates in man's destiny, making the sufferings of his people his own".<sup>173</sup> "Through the Spirit he suffers with the sufferings of his creatures. In his Spirit he experiences their annihilation."<sup>174</sup> This is why the Holy Spirit sighs

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> TKG, p.111.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p.102.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p.118.

<sup>174</sup> GC, p.97.

with the whole creation and cries out for redeeming freedom in enslaved creation.<sup>175</sup>

Although God does not abolish the power of Nothingness when he goes out of himself to create *ad extra*, his creation and preservation of the world is an act of inhibiting Nothingness from annihilating his creation immediately. In a certain sense, this is a kind of negation of Nothingness. In this sense, Moltmann writes:

*Creatio ex nihilo* in the beginning is the preparation and promise of the redeeming *annihilatio nihili*, from which the eternal being of creation proceeds. The creation of the world is itself a promise of resurrection, and the overcoming of death in the victory of eternal life (I Cor. 15.26, 55-57). So the resurrection and the kingdom of glory are fulfilment of the promise which creation itself represents.<sup>176</sup>

Creation out of nothing, then, is a promise event. On the one hand, God further limits himself when the Holy Spirit goes out himself and indwells in his creation so as to share the threat of Nothingness. On the other hand, the creation and preservation of the world through the creativity and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is at the same time the denial of the annihilating power of Nothingness over his creation. "The Spirit suffers creation's tendency to close in on itself and die, keeps it open beyond itself to life and to the future, and thereby turns creation's history of suffering into a history of

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<sup>175</sup> TKG, p.111. Cf. GC, p.97.

<sup>176</sup> GC, p.90.

hope".<sup>177</sup> The divine immanence in the world, that is , the indwelling of God through the Spirit in the world, then, "is a kenotic, suffering, contradicted presence, which can do no more than point towards the future kingdom of glory".<sup>178</sup>

The triune God does not merely permit the world which is other than him, but also indwells in it through the Spirit. This self-humiliation reaches its climax in the death of God the Son on the cross. Conversely, his resurrection is the beginning of overcoming Nothingness.

#### 6.5.2.2 God's Self-Limitation on the Cross

The self-limitation and self-de-limitation of the triune God are perceptible in the Christ event. The kenosis of God which is realised in the cross<sup>179</sup> is different from the indwelling of God's Spirit in his creation. On the cross, God does not merely enter into the situation of godforsakenness, he also adopts and accepts it himself as part of his own eternal life.<sup>180</sup> In the surrender of his

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<sup>177</sup> R. Bauckham, "Evolution and Creation: In Moltmann's Doctrine of Creation" *Epworth Review* 15/1 (1988), p.77. Cf. *GC*, p.102.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *TKG*, p.119.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

own Son God "exposes himself to the annihilating Nothingness".<sup>181</sup> Moltmann writes:

... by yielding up the Son to death in God-forsakenness on the cross, and by surrendering him to hell, the eternal God enters the Nothingness out of which he created the world ... It is the presence of his self-humiliating, suffering love for his creation, in which he experiences death itself.<sup>182</sup>

It is only at the cross that "God actually 'adopts' human experience into his own being, so that he now suffers 'infinite pain'".<sup>183</sup>

The Son takes up this experience of annihilation into his life because he is the Logos through whom the Father creates the world.<sup>184</sup> He is "the ground for the existence of the whole creation, human beings and nature alike".<sup>185</sup> That is, he is the mediator of creation and the centre for the whole creation.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, the incarnation of the son and its completion in his abandonment on the cross<sup>187</sup> mean that God preserves the world.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> GC, p.91.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> P.S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p.9.

<sup>184</sup> TKG, pp.112, 117.

<sup>185</sup> GC, p.94.

<sup>186</sup> TKG, p.112.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp.118-119.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p.108.



The cross is not merely the climax of God's self-limitation, but also the climax of the Son's responsive love for the Father<sup>189</sup> which begins when he becomes the Logos of the world at the creation. The Son abandons himself on the cross in love for the Father whereas the Father abandons the Son on the cross in love for the Son. This is because they both love the world so that their love for each other is expressed on the cross. "To put it in trinitarian terms - the Father lets his Son sacrifice himself through the Spirit. The Father is crucifying love, the Son is crucified love, and the Holy Spirit is the unvanquishable power of the cross."<sup>190</sup> It is through the Holy Spirit that the Father and the Son can both sacrifice themselves, though in different senses, and the Son in forsakenness can be joined and united with the Father.<sup>191</sup>

When the Son on the cross takes up the experience of annihilation into his being, the Trinity is open to the world. This does not mean that the Trinity is merely open at the cross. To put it in another way, it is at the cross that the opening of God's very inner being reaches its climax. In the Spirit's indwelling in the creation God is open to experience its annihilation but as far as death, whereas on the cross through the Son God's own self is open and exposed to the annihilating Nothingness so as to gather

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p.121.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

that Nothingness into his eternal being.<sup>192</sup> The latter is a radical opening of the being of the triune God in his history with the world.

### 6.5.3 God's Self-De-Limitation in His History with the World

#### 6.5.3.1 God's Self-De-Limitation in the Resurrection

The resurrection of the Son marks the beginning of God's self-de-limitation in his history with the world. This is because the resurrection is the negation of the cross. If on the cross the Son is annihilated by Nothingness, then in the resurrection the annihilating power of Nothingness begins to be overcome. The Nothingness is gathered into God's eternal being on the cross so that God can overcome it in himself through the resurrection. It is in this sense that the resurrection of the Son is called the promise of God to the world. Obviously, this is the culmination of God's promise since the indwelling of the Spirit in the creation.

"When the crucified Jesus 'appears' in glory to the women and the disciples after his death, this then means the pre-reflection of his future in the coming glory of God."<sup>193</sup> Although the resurrection means that "Christ is

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<sup>192</sup> *GC*, pp.91, 93.

<sup>193</sup> *TKG*, p.83.

raised from the dead into God's eternal life", it also means "at the same time the *transfiguration* of the humiliated and crucified Jesus into the glory of God".<sup>194</sup> Actually, God's self-glorification begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, though his glory will be fully de-limited at the *eschaton*.

How can Jesus be raised from death? It is the Father who raises the Son through the Spirit.<sup>195</sup> If the Son is delivered up by the Father through the Spirit, then he is raised by the Father through the Spirit. Accordingly, Moltmann writes: "God the Father glorifies Christ the Son through his resurrection, while the Son glorifies the Father through his obedience and his self-surrender. The event of their mutual glorification is the work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>196</sup> As the soteriological significance of the cross is shown only against the background of the resurrection, the glorifying significance of the Son's obedience and self-surrender is manifested only in the context of the Father's glorifying the Son through his resurrection.

Nevertheless, the resurrection of Christ is the Spirit's first eschatological work.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, "with

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead, history's last day is beginning",<sup>198</sup> "with the Spirit the End-time begins".<sup>199</sup>

#### 6.5.3.2 God's Self-De-Limitation through the Outpouring and Glorification of the Holy Spirit

If the Son is surrendered for the world, then he is raised for the world as well. Because the Son is the Logos of the whole creation, his resurrection is the foundation of the new creation. If Jesus' resurrection is the work of the Holy Spirit, then this world will be renewed through the Son as the mediator in the operation of the power of the Spirit. Therefore, "with Jesus' resurrection, transfiguration, transformation and glorification, the general *outpouring of the Holy Spirit* 'on all flesh' begins"<sup>200</sup> so as to transfigure the whole creation.

The Father sends the Spirit through the Son to the world so that the Spirit glorifies the Father through the Son by transfiguration of the creation. On the one hand, "in the outpouring of the Spirit on men and women, the Spirit comes *from the Father through the Son*".<sup>201</sup> On the other hand, "in the wake of glorification, the song of praise and the unity proceed *from the Spirit through the*

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p.126.

*Son to the Father*".<sup>202</sup> The Spirit is passive in the former while in the latter is active.<sup>203</sup>

This sending of the Spirit is out of the love of the Father and the Son. They express their love for each other through their love for the creation which drives them to send the Spirit so as to begin the transfiguration of the suffering creation.

"In the Spirit people already experience now what is still to come."<sup>204</sup> However, this experience can only be the foretaste of the coming glory. The annihilating Nothingness is not yet completely overcome until the eschatological moment in which the presence of the Spirit is in full and complete form.<sup>205</sup>

Corresponding to this eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the initial indwelling of the Spirit at creation. But there is a difference between these two acts of the Spirit. To put it simply, the latter is God's self-limitation while the former is his self-de-limitation. Without the indwelling of the Spirit in the creation the transfiguration of the world is impossible. The latter precedes the former while the former presupposes the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp.124-125.

latter. These two acts are connected because they proceed from the same Holy Spirit.

#### 6.5.4 God's Ultimate Self-De-Limitation in the Eschatological Moment

The eschatological moment is the moment in which the triune God completes his gathering of love in the creation. This moment corresponds to the primordial moment in which the triune God withdraws into himself for the sake of searching love in the creation.

In this moment the "*eschatological creation* of the kingdom of glory ... proceeds from the vanquishing of sin and death, that is to say, the annihilating Nothingness".<sup>206</sup> In other words, the annihilating Nothingness which threatens God's creatures is completely abolished when God's power and presence are fully derestricted in the creation by totally renewing it.

As a matter of fact, the condition of abolishing the annihilating Nothingness in the eschatological moment is precisely opposite to that of the emergence of Nothingness in the primordial moment. That is, God derestricts himself by totally transfiguring the whole creation and God withdraws himself from himself to himself so as to create the world respectively. It is for the sake of the world

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<sup>206</sup> GC, p.90.

that God is going to abolish in the eschatological moment the annihilating Nothingness which emerges in the primordial moment. It is in this sense that the eschatological moment is the negation of the primordial moment.

About this moment, Moltmann writes:

The original divine self-limitation which made the time and space of creation possible gives way to God's all-embracing, all-pervading derestriction of himself. What now comes into being is the new creation of all things in which, as Dante says, 'His glory, in whose being all things move, pervades creation'. Then the time of creation will become the eternal aeon of creation, and the space of creation will become the cosmic temple for God's indwelling. Created beings emerge out of time into the aeon of the divine glory through the raising of the dead and the cosmic annihilation of the power of death. Then all things will be brought back again from time, and will be gathered together.<sup>207</sup>

All people and things, world and time are gathered into the glorification of the Son and the Father through the Spirit in order to become *God's world*.<sup>208</sup> In this way, they are united with God and in God himself.<sup>209</sup> From this moment on the triune God is all in all: creation is glorified through its participation in the divine life and God is glorified in his indwelling of his creation.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> WJC, p.329.

<sup>208</sup> TKG, pp.126, 127.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.126.

<sup>210</sup> Bauckham, "Evolution and Creation: In Moltmann's Doctrine of Creation", p.75.

## 6.6 Conclusion: Dialectical Love as the Ontological Condition of God's History with the World

Obviously, in Moltmann's view, the trinitarian history of God with the world is initiated by his love. God's love is the ontological condition that makes his history with the world possible. Because of this love, there are creation, liberation and glorification. However, this love must be understood as dialectically structured. And out of it God acts dialectically.

First of all, this love is not self-related, selfishness, but other-related, selflessness. It is an external love in that the beloved is not God himself. It is this other-oriented nature that makes this love dialectically structured. Since this other is essentially different from God himself, God cannot love it in the way God loves himself within the immanent Trinity. The inner trinitarian love is analogical because the beloved is the other in the like. God cannot directly go out of himself to love the other. Rather he has to withdraw himself first. God's self-humiliation precedes his creative act; God's self-limitation points to his self-de-limitation. These two acts are the manifestation of God's two kinds of love.

The dialectical structure of God's love can be expressed in Moltmann's terms: suffering love and creative



love.<sup>211</sup> Likewise, "God's creative love is grounded in his humble, self-humiliating love".<sup>212</sup>

Out of God's suffering love, God withdraws himself from himself to himself so as to make room for the other which is not God. However, this conceded space will become annihilating Nothingness after creation. Therefore, from the very beginning God calls forth and indwells in the world through the Holy Spirit so as to preserve its existence against the annihilating Nothingness. By his self-limitation in the world, God begins his history with the world, a history of overcoming the annihilating power. This self-humiliating history reaches its climax in the death of the Son on the cross. God's initial self-limitation, then, is further manifested in his history with the suffering world. He does not merely spare space for the existence of the world, but also enters into its forsaken situation and even adopts it into his life.

Out of God's creative love, God begins to de-limit his power and presence starting with the resurrection of the Son. Because in the cross God takes up death into his very inner being, in the resurrection God shows that the annihilating power will be ultimately abolished. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit God's history with the world moves towards the ultimate glorification. In the

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>212</sup> GC, p.88.

eschatological moment, the annihilating Nothingness is totally abolished so that the world can be united with the triune God and in the triune God himself. There is no obstacle existing between God and his creation. God's power and presence pervade and embrace all. In this sense, the triune God is omnipresent.

## 7 Historical Transformation of the World

### 7.1 The Nature and Task of Christian Theology

#### 7.1.1 Introduction

Reflecting the features of his theology in "My Theological Career", Moltmann says: "I am attempting to reflect on a theology which has a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, a political responsibility."<sup>1</sup> This means that Moltmann's theology is eschatologically oriented with political significance. As pointed out by J.J. O'Donnell, "there has always been a messianic aspect to Moltmann's theology and the conviction that every theology is perforce a political theology".<sup>2</sup> In Moltmann's view, there can be no apolitical faith in Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Therefore a certain kind of political theology is inherent in Moltmann's eschatological oriented theology as well.

As a matter of fact, Moltmann's view-point towards the political significance of theology cannot be separated from

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<sup>1</sup> HTG, p.182.

<sup>2</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", *Heythrop Journal* 23/2 (1982), p.166.

<sup>3</sup> T. Cabestrero, *Faith: Conversations with Contemporary Theologians*, trans. D.D. Walsh (New York: Orbis, 1981), p.135; HD, p.99.

his eschatologically oriented theology. To put it simply, Moltmann's theology is necessarily political because it is eschatologically oriented. It is the nature of the eschatologically oriented theology that unavoidably at the same time makes itself political. When theology is constructed eschatologically, it is political. In other words, Moltmann's conception of theology from the very beginning determines the political shape of his theology.

Moltmann does not explicitly discuss the proper task and nature of Christian theology in his writing. However, when he examines several different interpretations of Christian theology and sees the whole Christian theology in an eschatological perspective, his view-point of this matter is expressed simultaneously. In the following, what the proper task and nature of Christian theology is and is not, according to Moltmann, will be examined firstly. Then, a further investigation will proceed focusing on the relationship of his eschatologically oriented theology to the political theology.

#### 7.1.2 Hegel's and Marx's Conception of Reality and Theory

In his *Theology of Hope* Moltmann makes a decisive statement:

The theologian is not concerned merely to supply a different *interpretation* of the world, of history and

of human nature, but to *transform* them in expectation of a divine transformation.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, Moltmann's preference of transformation to explanation is parallel to K. Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it."<sup>5</sup>

Surely, both Moltmann and Marx do not mean that the theologian and the philosopher have to give up their intellectual activity and involve themselves in the practical activity so as to change the world. Rather, it is about the nature and the task of theology and philosophy. Obviously, both of them are not content with the reflective nature and the interpretative function of theology and philosophy respectively. The point is: As a theory about reality, how does theology or philosophy relate itself to reality? The answer to this question presupposes the answer to another question: what is the nature of reality?

N. Lobkowitz notices that there are two different viewpoints towards reality in philosophy that can be represented by Aristotle, and Hegel and Marx respectively.

Aristotle philosophizes out of "wonder", out of an intellectual curiosity which is half awe, half the desire to adjust man's existence to the order of thing, the cosmos. Both Hegel and Marx, on the contrary, philosophize out of unhappiness and

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<sup>4</sup> TH, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> K. Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.423.

dissatisfaction, out of the "experience" that the world is not as it ought to be. Accordingly, while Aristotle primarily aims at understanding, at discovering structures and laws to which man's thought and actions have to adjust, Hegel and Marx aim at "reconciling" and/or "revolutionizing". In Aristotle nothing is or even can be wrong as in correcting the universe or in making it rational; it consists in discovering its inherent order and rationality and in adjusting oneself to it. In Hegel and Marx almost everything is wrong and consequently has to be *aufgehoben*, transfigured, transformed, revolutionized. In this respect the only truly important difference between Hegel and Marx is that Hegel is still enough committed to the Greek philosophical tradition to believe it possible to reconcile man with universe by teaching him adequately to understand it, while Marx, disappointed with Hegel's speculative transfiguration, has no faith in the healing and reconciling power of mere thought.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, reality can be viewed as ready-made and non-ready-made, perfect and imperfect. These two contrasted views of reality lead to two different kinds of theory of truth. If reality is viewed as objective, ready-made, then truth is statements describing the structures and laws of such a reality. And the relationship of the theory about reality to reality is merely reflective. That is, the function of theory is merely reflecting reality. Therefore, such a theory of truth is called correspondence theory of truth.

However, when reality is viewed as non-ready-made and imperfect, for Hegel and Marx, "the truth" lies only in the

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<sup>6</sup> N. Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), pp.340-341.

whole, the "negative totality".<sup>7</sup> Since Hegel confines himself to the Greek philosophical principle of the identity of thinking and Being, his view of the task of philosophy is similar to that of the Greek: "To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason."<sup>8</sup> From this vantage point, philosophy "is its own time apprehended in thoughts".<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, reality as history is the realisation of the Absolute Spirit. On the other hand, this is the same Spirit which manifests itself as subjective Spirit in human being so as to grasp itself in its self-realisation in history. It is precisely for this reason, Hegel writes: "As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, "philosophy grasps that which is, and expresses the reality of its age in thoughts".<sup>11</sup> In this way, philosophy, instead of criticising the existing reality, merely tries to understand it.

Marx does not agree with Hegel that philosophy is merely a moment of the Absolute Spirit grasping itself and

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<sup>7</sup> H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1983), p.313.

<sup>8</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, pp.12-13.

<sup>11</sup> Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology and Hope, III", *Heythrop Journal* 10/1 (1969) p.32.

truth is the Absolute Spirit's self-understanding of its concrete realization in history through the subjective Spirit. Such a philosophy "can therefore provide only a post factum interpretation of history".<sup>12</sup> Marx believes that "not only the past but also the future is capable of interpretation, involving not only a passive understanding, but also action with an awareness of its significance and extent".<sup>13</sup>

"Although Marx rejects a theory that understands itself as a synthesis which completes and reconciles the world in a system, he does not reject theory as *critique*".<sup>14</sup> In J. Habermas' view, for Marx, philosophy as critique "is aware that philosophical contemplation is an expression of the alienation of the philosophical self-understanding with its false conception of its own theoretical character, of its assumed but non-existent theoretical autarchy".<sup>15</sup> Obviously, Marx criticizes Hegel's understanding of philosophy as alienation of its real nature, that is, abandoning its critical function so as to be the mirror reflecting existing reality.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.34.

<sup>15</sup> J. Habermas, "Ein Marxistischer Schelling - Zu Ernst Blochs spekulativem Materialismus" in *Theorie und Praxis* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), p.349f. This article is not translated and collected in the English version *Theory and Practice*. Cited from Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology and Hope, III", p.34.



Marx steps beyond Hegel to requires a different understanding of philosophy. He is essentially different from Hegel at the point that he "relocates or redefines the central motor of historical development and self-actualization":<sup>16</sup> "Instead of denoting the steady unfolding of idea, or spirit, *actualization* now means the progressive display of human productive capabilities ..."<sup>17</sup> Correspondingly, philosophy is no longer the self-reflective-understanding of the Absolute Spirit, but human being's critical interpretation of the reality.

Then, philosophy, as theory about reality, does not offer a reflective interpretation of the world but criticises reality as imperfect so as to provoke practical activity transforming it. There is not any immediate corresponding relationship between theory and the present reality. In this sense, theory is not pure but critical. Truth is not abstract statement about reality but concrete transformation of reality. The human subject thus is actively involved in the articulation of truth. Therefore, for the anti-reflectionist Western Marxists, "truth is conceived as essentially the practical *expression* of a subject, rather than the theoretically adequate *representation* of an object".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> F.R. Dallmayr, *G.W.F. Hegel: Modernity and Politics* (London: Sage, 1993), p.193.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> R. Bhaskar, "Truth" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. T. Bottomore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.493.

Philosophy, for Marx, is critical theory rather than pure theory.

### 7.1.3 Christian Theology as Pure Theory

According to Moltmann, Christian theology as pure theory "did not arise until the Middle Ages".<sup>19</sup> Under the influence of Aristotelian philosophy, Thomas Aquinas defines this kind of theology as theory about God which is different from theology as practical theory concerned with the history of salvation.<sup>20</sup> Theology becomes *theoria* in the Aristotelian sense. For Aristotle, theoretical activity is one that acquires knowledge of the eternal and unchanging.<sup>21</sup> Such a life, the *bios theoretikos*, is the life devoted to intellectual contemplation.<sup>22</sup> Aquinas follows Aristotle in understanding theory in terms of the universality of all speculative knowledge which only takes God, being, etc. as its object.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> CG, p.66.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> N. Lobkowitz, "On the History of Theory and Praxis" in *Political Theory and Praxis: New Perspectives*, ed. T. Ball (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p.16.

<sup>22</sup> W. Post, "Theory and Practice" in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* vol.6, ed. K. Rahner et al. (London: Burns and Oates; New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p.246.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp.246-247.

However, this does not mean that God can be contemplated directly. Rather, theology is the intellectual activity through "the likenesses of God in nature, history and tradition, which indirectly reflect and reveal something of God himself"<sup>24</sup> to grasp God himself. In other words, it is an activity of knowing like through like but not unlike. Theology as knowing God is an indirect intellectual activity. Yet the character of such a way of doing theology clearly is reflective.

Moltmann finds that in the course of the history of Christian theology, such a kind of Christian talk of God has been manifested in three great schemes of verification of Christian truth.<sup>25</sup> They are cosmo-theology or historico-theology, ethico-theology or existential theology and onto-theology.<sup>26</sup> They all share the same feature that "a reality in the disclosure of which revelation can be shown to be meaningful, necessary and useful" is presupposed.<sup>27</sup> That is, in order to vindicate the existence of God who is proclaimed in the Bible, they presuppose that there is a corresponding relationship between reality and God.<sup>28</sup> It is in this context that Christian theology becomes theological

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<sup>24</sup> *CG*, p.68.

<sup>25</sup> *HP*, p.4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-15; *TH*, pp.272-281.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

reflection starting with a certain sense of reality so as to prove God's existence and understand his nature as well.

This kind of theology interprets God by interpreting reality. The cosmo-theology argues from the unity of reality as cosmos to the one divine *arche* whereas the historico-theology argues from the unity of reality as history to the one God of history.<sup>29</sup> For the existential theology "God can be grasped only when men grasp their existence ... only where man chooses himself as his own possibility".<sup>30</sup> For onto-theology "to think of God means to rethink his thoughts of himself and what is thought of by him".<sup>31</sup> Clearly the method of such theological thinking is reflective. Interpretation, then, means reflection. The cosmos-theology reflects God through reflecting reality as the whole cosmos whereas the historico-theology reflects God through reflecting reality as the whole of history. The existential theology reflects God through reflecting reality as authentic human existence whereas the onto-theology reflects God through reflecting reality as God's self-reflection/self-interpretation. On the one hand, it takes reality as a mirror reflecting God. On the other hand, it reflects God through the mirroring reality.

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<sup>29</sup> *TH*, p.77.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.274.

<sup>31</sup> *HP*, pp.13-14.

This kind of theology assumes that there is already something in reality, no matter what this reality is, either cosmos or history, human existence or God's word, through which God is revealed. As Moltmann points out: "All proofs of God are at bottom anticipations of that eschatological reality in which God is revealed in all things to all. They assume this reality as already present and as immediately perceptible to every man".<sup>32</sup> In other words, such reality is completed and finished.

Then, the knowledge of God becomes possible only when this kind of reality is reflected. Christian theology is merely reflection of God through a correlate reality. In this way, pure theory of God is merely contemplation of God which "abandons the realm of the transitory, of mere appearance and uncertain opinion, and finds true, eternal being in the *logos*".<sup>33</sup> That is, the unredeemed reality is abandoned in the process of this kind of Christian thinking.

To sum it up, because reality reflects God, theology can reflect God through reflecting the correlative reality. The reflective character of Christian theology is determined by the reflecting relationship of reality to God. There are two reflections which happen. One is between reality and God whereas the other is between theology, and

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<sup>32</sup> TH, pp.281-282.

<sup>33</sup> CG, , p.68.

reality and God. Theology, then, is pure theory of grasping this relationship and understanding God's existence and nature through this relationship. Truth "is experienced in correspondence, conformity and agreement" between word and cosmos or history, word and existence, word and name respectively.<sup>34</sup> It merely requires contemplation rather than praxis.

Nevertheless, a point should be clarified here. Does Moltmann totally reject pure theory? As a matter of fact, Moltmann refuses to view Christian theology as pure theory not requiring *praxis*. In other words, for Moltmann, Christian theology in general cannot be pure theory; pure theory is not the essence of Christian theology. This does not necessarily exclude pure theory having a position in Christian theology. Actually, Moltmann allocates pure theory a proper place according to his eschatologically oriented theology. To put it simply, pure theory is possible only when it is considered as doxology.

In doxology, "God is recognised, not only in his goodly works but in his goodness itself",<sup>35</sup> "God is ultimately worshipped and loved for himself, not merely for salvation's sake".<sup>36</sup> However, Moltmann further points out that "Christian doxology always ends with the

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<sup>34</sup> HP, p.16.

<sup>35</sup> TKG, p.153.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

eschatological prospect, looking for 'the perfecting of thy kingdom in glory ...'"<sup>37</sup> In this sense, doxology is merely a foretaste of participating in the fullness of the divine life. It is only when the history and experience of salvation are completed and perfected that men and women can know God in their eternal praise and worship.

Moreover, this kind of Christian doxology, because it is based on the experience of salvation which directs one towards God himself,<sup>38</sup> is inescapably bound to Christian *praxis*. As Moltmann put it: "Mediation can never lead to flight from the Christian practice required of us, because, being Christian mediation, it is *meditatio passionis et mortis Christis*. Practice can never become the flight from mediation because, as Christian practice, it is bound to discipleship of the crucified Jesus."<sup>39</sup>

#### 7.1.4 Eschatological Theology and Political Theology

In his first important book *Theology of Hope* Moltmann plainly claims: "Christianity is eschatology ... it [eschatology] is the medium of Christian faith as such".<sup>40</sup> Moltmann characterizes Christian theology as eschatology. "Hence eschatology cannot really be only a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.8. Cf. *TT*, pp.92-94.

<sup>40</sup> *TH*, p.16.

part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation ...<sup>41</sup> That is, all theological statements must be constructed and understood within the framework of eschatology. "For Moltmann eschatology is the be-all and the end-all of theology; it forms the 'foundation' and 'mainspring' of all theological thought."<sup>42</sup> In Moltmann's wording, eschatology is the universal horizon of all theology as such.<sup>43</sup> In this way, the nature and task of Christian theology is determined by the character of its eschatology.

Then, what is the character of this eschatology? This has to do with the content of Christian eschatology. Simply, it is about the future. But it does not speak of the future as such. "It sets out from a definite reality in history and announces the future of that reality, its future possibilities and its power over the future ... It recognizes the reality of the raising of Jesus and proclaims the future of the risen Lord."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, this future is not the continuation or regular recurrence of the present. It cannot be spoken of in the form of the Greek *logos*, which refers to a reality which is there, now and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> H. Zahrnt, *The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century*, trans. R.A. Wilson (London: Collins, 1969), p.197.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. TH, p.137.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.17.



always, but only in "the form of statements of hope and of promise".<sup>45</sup>

Here a significant point should be noticed. There is not any correspondence between the statements of eschatology and the present reality. In other words, the statements do not correspondingly reflect the *status quo*. Rather they primarily point to the outstanding future which is different from the present. Moltmann's speaking of the nature of hope's statements of promise in contrast to that of doctrinal statements clearly expresses this point:

"The truth of doctrinal statements is found in the fact that they can be shown to agree with the existing reality which we can all experience. Hope's statements of promise, however, must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced."<sup>46</sup>

Then the truth of hope's statements is not the concurrence between those statements and the present experienced reality, but between those statements and the future. In this way, when Christian theology is characterized by eschatology, it is no longer a theory mirroring the existing reality but pointing out its changeableness and transformableness. When Moltmann says that "a proper theology would therefore have to be constructed in the light of its future goal",<sup>47</sup> then its task is not offering

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.18; cf. p.118.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.16.

explanations or interpretations for the existing reality.

As Moltmann writes:

... in the medium of hope our theological concepts become not judgements which nail reality down to what it is, but anticipations which show reality its prospects and its future possibilities. Theological concepts do not give a fixed form to reality, but they are expanded by hope and anticipate future being.<sup>48</sup>

Then what is the relationship of theology to the present reality? Moltmann shares with the merit of Hegel and Marx that reality is not ready-made. However, he tends to agree with Marx's critique of Hegel's conception of theory. Whereas Hegel writes: "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk",<sup>49</sup> Moltmann writes: "They [theological concepts] do not limp after reality and gaze on it with the night eyes of Minerva's owl, but they illuminate reality by displaying its future."<sup>50</sup> Like Marx, Moltmann considers that theology does not merely interpret the world but changes it.

In his article "What is 'New' in Christianity" Moltmann says that "an eschatologically oriented faith ... is not interested in an event that took place at the beginning of time or in explaining why the world exists and why it is as it is. It ... wants to change the world rather than explain

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp.35-36.

<sup>49</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p.13.

<sup>50</sup> *TH*, p.36.

it, to transform existence rather than elucidate it".<sup>51</sup> He clearly points out that it is the eschatological nature of faith which requires to change the world.

However, the relationship between such a faith and the practical activity of changing the world is not that between pure theory and the application of pure theory. This kind of relationship is mutually external. That is, theory does not necessarily require application and application is not essential to the nature of theory. On the contrary, in Moltmann's case, *praxis* is out of the nature of the eschatological theology and in turn provisionally realises the truth of the latter within the history of this world. Their relationship is internal.

In a word, when Christian theology is comprehended in terms of eschatologically oriented faith, it criticises the present reality so as to provoke concrete practical activity that transforms the present reality and in turn confirms such a faith provisionally. The demand and requirement for changing and transforming the world is not arbitrary but necessary. In this way, Christian theology is not pure theory but critical so that *praxis* is involved necessarily. That is, it is the critical character of the eschatological faith that requires transformation of the present reality. In this way, *praxis* is a necessary critical moment of this eschatological faith.

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<sup>51</sup> RRF, p.5.

This *praxis* is not limited to any definite sphere since against the horizon of God's eschatological promise every aspect of the whole creation is to be changed. Because Moltmann apprehends politics as "the inclusive horizon of the life of mankind",<sup>52</sup> this *praxis* is political then. It follows that the eschatological theology is political as well.

In this sense, political theology is not a regional theology and a kind of applied theology. As J.B. Metz points out: "political theology is not primarily a new theological discipline among others, with a regional task of its own. And it is not simply a sort of 'applied theology' - theology applied to politics and human society."<sup>53</sup> Political theology is not the application of the eschatological theology.

Furthermore, in Moltmann's view, political theology "does not want to make political instead of theological questions the central concern of theology but, the reverse".<sup>54</sup> "It wants to be thoroughly Christian in the political functions of theology."<sup>55</sup> This is because, in Moltmann's theology, the political theology declares

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<sup>52</sup> *RRF*, p.98.

<sup>53</sup> J.B. Metz, "Political Theology" in *Sacramentum Mundi* vol.5, ed. K. Rahner et al. (London: Burns and Oates/New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p.35.

<sup>54</sup> *HD*, p.99. Cf. *EH*, p.102.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

eschatology as the foundation and medium of Christian theology, the roots of political theology lie in "the theology of hope".<sup>56</sup> In other words, political theology is defined by the eschatological theology so that its function is not "to give political systems and movements religious support",<sup>57</sup> but to criticise and to provoke transformation of the present reality.

In sum, there is an inner logic between Moltmann's eschatological theology and his political theology, eschatological faith and political *praxis*. Actually, in Moltmann's theology, political *praxis* is a mediated human action through which the eschatological faith derives the historical transformation of the world. That is, political *praxis* is required by the nature of such an eschatological faith so as to transform the whole world historically. Because political *praxis* and historical transformation are inseparable, they can be seen as two different sides of the same process.

In the following a further discussion will be pursued focusing on the objective and subjective conditions for the historical transformation. Simply, the objective condition is the possibility of transformation of the world whereas the subjective condition is the emergence of humanity's critical consciousness. After that, the critical function

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.100.

<sup>57</sup> EH, p.102.

of such a eschatological-political faith which provokes *praxis* for historical transformation is going to be examined. That is, its critique of idolatry and the correlative reality will be analysed so as to disclose the deep structure of the present reality and the direction for subjective *praxis* and objective historical transformation.

## 7.2 The Conditions for Historical Transformation

How can the reality of the world be transformed historically? Under what conditions is the world transformable? The possibility of transforming the reality of the world, in Moltmann's case, is grounded in the eschatological-dialectical Christ event. That is, the world is transformable only when God eschatologically and dialectically acts in the Christ event. God in the Christ event does not merely open the possibility of transforming the reality of the world but also provokes the subjective *praxis* of transformation by arousing one's critical consciousness. In other words, in the Christ event God establishes the objective and subjective conditions for the historical transformation of the world.

In the following these two conditions for the world transformation will be discussed in regard to the eschatological-dialectical Christ event.

### 7.2.1 The Eschatological-Dialectical Nature of the Christ Event

These two natures, eschatological and dialectical, for Moltmann, are not isolated from each other, but are inter-related to one another. To put it simply, the Christ event is simultaneously "dialectical" eschatological and "eschatological" dialectical. The dialectical meaning of the Christ event and the eschatological meaning of the Christ event are mutually controlled.

The Christ event is eschatological because it is firstly to be understood as God's self-revelation in the context of the Old Testament history of promise. The "divine act of raising the crucified, dead and buried Jesus to new life is an event - the definite event - of eschatological promise".<sup>58</sup> It is dialectical because in the resurrection God negates his self-negation in the cross. The Christ event is a dialectical movement of God's self-negation and negation of negation.

When the eschatological Christ event is grasped as dialectical, it means that the eschatological resurrection is not a sequential fact of the cross event. When the dialectical Christ event is comprehended as eschatological, it means that the negation in the resurrection represents

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<sup>58</sup> R. Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42/2 (1989), p.203.

the beginning of the "ultimate" sublation. In a word, the Christ event is God's eschatological-dialectical act.

With this understanding one can proceed to the discussion of the transformability of the reality of the world.

#### 7.2.2 The Transformability of the Reality of the World

The eschatological-dialectical Christ event is a soteriological event. In the cross Jesus Christ identifies himself with the world by negating himself unto death. His destiny is interwoven with that of the world. However, God the Father negates the cross by raising God the Son from death in the eschatological resurrection. In the cross God accepts and adopts all negative elements of this world so that in the sublation of the crucified Jesus God begins to abolish those negative qualities of the present reality. The eschatological resurrection of Christ is not merely the promise for the ultimate future of the present world but also the soteriological event which opens the way to this future.

Apparently, when God identifies himself with the present reality in the cross, the world will participate in the destiny of the risen Christ in turn. The present reality will be sublated in the eschatological future, like the sublation of the crucified Jesus in the risen Christ.



Then this world has two different kinds of reality. What is the relationship of these two realities? Because of God's identification with the world in the crucified Jesus, the relationship of the cross to the resurrection determines that of the present reality to the future reality of the world. In this context, as Bauckham points out: "To Moltmann's dialectical Christology - in which the resurrection contradicts the cross - corresponds a dialectical eschatology, in which the promise contradicts present reality."<sup>59</sup> Like the total contradiction of cross and resurrection,<sup>60</sup> the contradiction of the present reality and the promised future reality is total as well.

However, this absolute contradiction in the dialectical Christology and the dialectical eschatology must be understood in terms of the Hegelian dialectic. As the dialectic happens in the Christ event, the present reality of the world is sublated in the future reality of the world. There is continuity in radical discontinuity, identity in total contradiction.<sup>61</sup> Of this, Bauckham speaks to the point: "God's promise [in the resurrection] is for a radically new future, but a radically new future *for this world*. Just as it is the same Jesus who was crucified and

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<sup>59</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.204.

<sup>60</sup> TH, p.199.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp.199-200.

raised, so God's promise is not for *another* world, but for the new creation of *this* world."<sup>62</sup>

In other words, what contradict each other are not this world and another world but the present reality and the future reality of the same world. It follows that what is abandoned is not the world itself but its present reality. There are not two different worlds but two different realities of the same world. Then R.A. Alves' and W. Pannenberg's interpretation of Moltmann's dialectic as "a 90-degree rotation of the idea of transcendence of the early Barth"<sup>63</sup> is a mis-reading. Moltmann's dialectic, apparently, is very different from the Barthian dialectic. The contradiction of present and future is resolute in the former dialectic while the contradiction of time and eternity in the latter dialectic is unresolved.

In this way, the contradiction of the present reality and the promised future reality means that the world will be transformed from the present reality to its contradiction, the future reality. This is to say that the reality of the world is transformable, not fixed.

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<sup>62</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.204.

<sup>63</sup> R.A. Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Indiana: Abbey, 1975), p.61; cf. W. Pannenberg, *Christian Spirituality and Sacramental Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p.51; L.B. Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp.229-230.

However, one point has to be clarified. The transformability of the reality of the world primarily means that the godless and godforsaken present reality can radically change to a totally different future in which suffering and death are overcome. In other words, the reality of the world is understood as changeable firstly in the eschatological sense. It is the eschatological future that make this transformability eschatological.

This is very different from that within the present reality of the world. The latter is a historical one to which corresponds a historical future. Then, there are two different kinds of transformability and correspondingly two different kinds of future. The question is: What is the relationship between these two?

Simply, it is the eschatological future that makes the historical future possible. That is, the eschatological future is the ontological condition for the historical future. Likewise, the historical transformability is ontologically determined by the eschatological transformability. How does this happen?

First of all, the ultimate eschatological future is one that is open to the concrete present reality. That is, an ultimate future which is different from the concrete present is open to the world. Because the concrete present is not yet transformed into the ultimate future, it then

can be transformed into the concrete historical future. That is, before the concrete present is sublated in the ultimate future, it can be transformed historically. In this way, a different historical future can be created from the historical present.

However, on the one hand, because when comparing with the ultimate future every historical future is not absolute but relative, then every historical moment is not fixed but transformable. On the other hand, the most significant reason for further future transformation is that every historical future will be permeated by the annihilating power of death and turned into godlessness and godforsakenness. Therefore, the historical transformation cannot cease until the world arrives at the ultimate future through the eschatological transformation. Although every historical future will be annulled by the Nothingness, there is still an outstanding future open for the world because of the not yet existing ultimate future. The world has a historical future because the history of the world has an ultimate eschatological future. And corresponding to the dialectical eschatological transformation, such a transformation is dialectical historical. It is in this sense that reality is understood as history.

Therefore, Moltmann claims that "Christian revelation does not introduce something which was already there independent of it, something which was always beginning or

is eternal".<sup>64</sup> Rather it announces a reality which does not yet exist but contradicts the present reality when God reveals himself in the resurrection of the crucified one. In Moltmann's view, this contradiction "can become not only an argument against what is Christian but even become an argument against reality".<sup>65</sup> There is not any ready-made, completed and finished reality mirroring God's nature, but one that "is already transformable in the direction of its future eschatological transformation".<sup>66</sup>

In this way, God is the wholly transforming one who makes the reality of the world eschatologically and historically transformable in the Christ event.

### 7.2.3 The Emergence of the Critical Consciousness

The eschatological-dialectical Christ event is soteriological as well as revelatory. This in turn brings out two consequences. Firstly, the reality of the world is transformable, either eschatologically or historically. Secondly, when one is confronted by this revelatory Christ event, his or her critical consciousness will be awakened. How does this happen?

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<sup>64</sup> HP, p.15.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>66</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.204.

Firstly, the reality of the world is disclosed in the Christ event. Moltmann says in his study of Bonhoeffer: "The revelation of Jesus Christ is not just revelation of God, his being and his actions, but is at the same time a revelation of the reality of the world."<sup>67</sup> This statement is appropriate in understanding of Moltmann's theology as well. Secondly, according to R.A. Alves, it is the promised future revealed in the resurrection that arouses one's critical consciousness.

Man is immersed in the power of "what is", without any critical distance to negate it, without any future dimension. His consciousness is thus definitely prey to the power of "what is". It is only the word of promise that accordingly creates a new dimension, the *inadequatio rei et intellectus*. Promise is thus the element which, introduced into the intellect, gives it the critical distance to negate "what is".<sup>68</sup>

Because of its total difference to "what is", the promised future revealed in the resurrection awakens one from the present reality. The promise "gives the believer a critical distance from his present so that he can recognise its deficiencies".<sup>69</sup> In other words, the critical distance created by the contradiction between the promised future and the present makes one aware that his present has to be

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<sup>67</sup> *Die Mündige Welt*, vol.III (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1955-1963 [vols.I-IV]), p.45. Cited from H. Pfeifer, "The Form of Justification: On the Question of the Structure in Bonhoeffer's Theology" in *A Bonhoeffer Legacy: Essays in Understanding*, ed. A.J. Klassen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p.31.

<sup>68</sup> Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, p.59.

<sup>69</sup> R. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987), p.42.

criticised. Then in addition to that the historical transformability of the reality of the world is disclosed, one's critical consciousness is awakened. In this sense, Moltmann says: "Hence it [God's promise] does not give rise to powers of accommodation, but set loose powers that are critical of being."<sup>70</sup>

However, this does not necessarily mean that Moltmann merely thinks that "there is one transcendental hope (because not related to any specific situation) that makes man aware of the pain of his present".<sup>71</sup> The resurrection, on the one hand, points to the not-yet realised different future, and on the other hand, presupposes the cross in which God identifies with the present suffering reality. When one is confronted by the Christ event, he or she is not merely confronted by the resurrection but also by the cross. That is, one can be aware of the suffering of his or her present.

This is because the Christ event is not merely God's promise but also the way God gives his promise. It is God's dialectical way of giving promise to the world that reveals God himself. In this context, one comes to know the reality of the world and the reality of God in the Christ event simultaneously. Apparently, God through his self-negation and negation of negation in the Christ event gives his

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<sup>70</sup> TH, p.119.

<sup>71</sup> Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, p.59.

eschatological promise to the world. In this way, for the sake of the world, God shares the destiny of the world in the cross so that a different future for the world is open in the resurrection. Then, one cannot know the world apart from knowing God in the Christ event. Through knowing God's self-negation and negation of negation one comes to know the reality of the world.

Then what does this have to do with the awakening of one's critical consciousness? Simply, God's destiny in the Christ event does not merely make one know the reality of the world but makes one conscious its severity.

In the cross, God the Son is crucified. Jesus Christ in his suffering and death identifies himself with the world. On the one hand, this discloses that the present reality of the world is subject to the power of godlessness and godforsakenness. On the other hand, it discloses that even God the Son is annihilated by Nothingness.

In the resurrection, God the Son is raised from death. The crucified Jesus is sublated in the risen Christ. On the one hand, this discloses that a totally different but not yet realised reality for the world is open. On the other hand, it discloses that God is a God who does not accommodate to the present reality but negates the annihilating power of Nothingness.



In this context, one can understand M.D. Meeks' saying of the critical awakening function of God's act in the cross: "The primal protest-character of man ... is awakened by God who suffers in the cross".<sup>72</sup> The cross makes one aware of the seriousness of the present abandoned situation that even God the Son is forsaken on the cross and thus provokes one to protest against it. Both the cross and the resurrection, in different way, awake one's critical consciousness toward the present reality. In the resurrection God's act of raising Jesus Christ from death does not merely give a promise to the world so that one can criticise the present, but also strengthens and reinforces one's protest consciousness provoked by the cross.

The resurrection arouses human being's negating consciousness by revealing that God negates the present reality through raising Jesus Christ from death. The cross awakens one's protest consciousness by revealing that God protests against the present reality through Jesus Christ's utter involvement in suffering. In other words, it is the critical character of the Christ event that makes one's critical consciousness awakened. Apparently, this critical character is out of the dialectical nature of the Christ event. The resurrection is God's negation of the suffering reality whereas the cross is God's protest against the same reality because it is God's self-negation. Then in a sense

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<sup>72</sup> M.D. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p.153.

it is the dialectical Christ event that arouses one's critical consciousness towards the present reality of the world.

To sum it up, one's critical consciousness is aroused by both the promising content and the way of promising for the world in the eschatological-dialectical Christ event.

With the realization of the transformability of the reality of the world and the awakening of the critical consciousness, one then comes to change the world in the direction of its promised transformation by realising the objective possibilities in the present which is open by the ultimate future. In the following the character of historical transformation will be discussed firstly before analysing the critique of idolatry and reality in the Christ event.

### 7.3 The Character of Historical Transformation

Basically, Moltmann does not discuss the historical transformation of the world much. However, there are several characteristics worth noting and clarifying when it is compared with the eschatological transformation and historical evolution.

#### 7.3.1 Non-Ultimate but Relatively Corresponding

As discussed above, there is a causal connexion between eschatological transformation and historical transformation. However, the causal connexion cannot be reversed. Although eschatological transformation ontologically opens the possibility for historical transformation, the latter does not create the eschatological future. They are two different kinds of transformation. Historical transformation is not eschatological transformation.

When compared with the radical, total, whole eschatological transformation in the sense that suffering and death and transitoriness are completely overcome, historical transformation is non-ultimate. That is, through historical transformation the world will not automatically arrive at the ultimate future. This is because the world "has no immanent possibility of transcending its own tendency towards nothingness".<sup>73</sup> The *novum* in the *eschaton* is placed in God's hand<sup>74</sup> but not in humanity's hand. It is only God who can create a qualitatively new future for the world out of nothingness.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.42.

<sup>74</sup> *HP*, p.183.

<sup>75</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.42.

Although the kingdom of God is not "seen in a historic transformation of the godless state of man and the world",<sup>76</sup> its relative correspondence can be seen in history. That is, historical transformation in a sense is humanity's endeavour of seeking "in the inadequate materials of transitory history that which bears correspondence to God's future".<sup>77</sup> The non-ultimate character of historical transformation merely means that historical transformation is not absolutely identical with eschatological transformation. It does not exclude that the former relatively corresponds to the latter. For Moltmann, "in the expectation of divine transformation we transform ourselves and the conditions around us into the likeness of the new creation".<sup>78</sup>

This character of relative correspondence is expressed in two points: first, the nature of the future which the transformation aims at; second, the way of the transformation. Although every concrete historical future does not radically overcome the power of Nothingness, it does negate its manifestation in a concrete historical present in the socio-political reality and its relationship to the natural reality. Although such a transformation does not operate dialectically once for all, it really is a dialectical process in which every particular forsaken

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<sup>76</sup> *TH*, p.221.

<sup>77</sup> *RRF*, p.122.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.

present is to be negated by another new historical future. This two points are going to be further explicated in the following immediately.

### 7.3.2 Non-Evolutionary but Dialectically Transformative

In "Hope and Development", Moltmann explicitly expresses his view-point towards the development of the world:

... it is not permissible for faith to develop society's future in an evolutionary way. It must develop it dialectically and in representation for those who have become, and are going to become, the victims of previous and present evolution.<sup>79</sup>

Obviously, Moltmann does not agree with the evolutionary way but proposes that the world has to be developed dialectically. It seems to Moltmann that these two ways of development are mutually exclusive. However, what Moltmann opposes is that the world can be exclusively developed in an evolutionary way. This does not mean that to a certain extent such a way is not valid and legitimate. Then why does Moltmann oppose taking evolution as the exclusive way of world change? And to what extent is such a way acceptable?

The relatively corresponding historical future cannot be reached by evolution if the concrete historical present already totally contradicts the ultimate future. For

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<sup>79</sup> FC, p.57.

Moltmann, it can be brought forth only by critical negation of the present. Here two different kinds of historical future emerge. The first one is called *futurum* derived from the present. The second one is not derived from the present but is the negation of it. However, these two are possible because of *adventus* or *Zukunft*.

"*Adventus* has its equivalent in the Greek word *parousia*"<sup>80</sup> which theologically means "the unique and then final coming of God and a world which is in total correspondence to him - their coming to the godless and Godforsaken".<sup>81</sup> In other words, this *adventus* is the ultimate future not emerging from the present but from God himself. It can "bring something which is principally new and radically transforming, which is neither in its reality nor in its potentially already in existence".<sup>82</sup> Therefore, future as *adventus* means that the reality of the world is not fixed and prescribed but open with possibility.

With this understanding Moltmann can talk of the historical future in the senses of evolution and revolution as stated above. Because of the openness, the concrete present can be either developed out of its potential into an extrapolated future or dialectically transformed into a different new future. Although these two futures are still

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<sup>80</sup> *FC*, p.29; cf. p.55.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>82</sup> *FH*, p.15.

under the power of Nothingness so as to be non-ultimate, they are different from each other in nature. As Moltmann says, the future "in the sense of *Futur* is the temporal prolongation of being",<sup>83</sup> "an extrapolated and extended present".<sup>84</sup> On the contrary, the historical transformed future is not of such a kind. Through the anticipation of the ultimate future, this historical future is created by negating the present which does not correspond to the eschatological future. In sum, as a non-fixed reality, the world is open to change in a evolutionary way or in a revolutionary way. That is, one can develop the world evolutionarily or revolutionarily.

But under what condition is evolutionary development allowed? For Moltmann, the answer is obvious: *futurum* corresponds to *adventus*. Apparently, this is possible only when *futurum* is extrapolated from a historical present which relatively corresponds to the eschatological future. A corresponding concrete present is to be presupposed. To this extent, planning taking place by extrapolation for development is allowed and necessary.

On the other hand, Moltmann considers that "in actual practice we have constantly to link the two [extrapolation and anticipation] together".<sup>85</sup> This implies that one

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<sup>83</sup> *FC*, p.30.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

cannot totally negate the present while there is still the possibility for developing a better future out of it. For Moltmann, one has to "realistically recognise and accept the real and objective possibilities that bear some correspondence with the future set before him".<sup>86</sup> In this way, planning is needed as well but under the direction of hope so as to seek the real possibilities of the present which correspond to the desirable future projected by hope.<sup>87</sup> Then evolution is still allowed while the present is not totally corrupt, that is, there are new realms of possibilities in the present reality for further realisation. However, it must be guided by hope. Otherwise any evolution will benefit only those who possess and dominate the present and neglect those who have been left behind.<sup>88</sup>

In this context, Moltmann stresses the feed-back relationship between hope and planning: "The impulse of hope must be controlled in the effect of planning and, conversely, the effects of planning must be controlled in the intentions of hope."<sup>89</sup> In D.L. Migliore's words: "Without hope, planning loses its original impetus and its guiding vision. Without planning, hope becomes

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<sup>86</sup> RRF, p.122.

<sup>87</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.44.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. FC, pp.43, 57.

<sup>89</sup> HP, p.193.



unrealistic."<sup>90</sup> On the one hand, planning is a way through which historical transition from the possible to the real is consciously made and completed.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, hope demands planning which realises the possibilities inherent in the present reality not merely for the establishment but also for the oppressed and the neglected.<sup>92</sup>

In this way, dialectic is introduced into the development of the world that the over domination of the establishment is to be negated by creating a different future for the have-nots, the suffering and the guilty through the realisation of the not yet exhausted possibility in the present. Therefore, even though the future is developed out of the present, it contradicts the present. It is hope that makes the present possibility realised corresponding to the ultimate future so as to contradict the present reality. In this sense, the world is transformed dialectically.

However, when the concrete present is totally corrupted and the possibility for change from within does not exist, it seems to Moltmann that revolution is unavoidable. He writes: "... revolutions begin ... because the conditions

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<sup>90</sup> D.L. Migliore, "Biblical Eschatology and Political Hermeneutics", *Theology Today* 26/2 (1969-1970), p.128. Cf. Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.44.

<sup>91</sup> *HP*, p.194.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *FC*, pp.56-57; *HFM*, 56-57.

and institutions of the present are no longer capable of coping with the problems of the future".<sup>93</sup> Obviously, this means that revolutionary change takes place when the possibility of change within the concrete present is exhausted. Revolutionary change is not unconditional but under the condition stated above. Therefore, a new different historical future full of possibility for further development is created. However, since it is still under the power of Nothingness, a further corruption seems to be unavoidable. As Moltmann writes of this,

it is impossible to anticipate the end of history under the conditions of history, that it is impossible under the conditions of estrangement and as one who himself is estranged to anticipate the home of true humanity, that it is impossible as a sinner to overcome sin. Thus out of this battle always new history emerges, new estrangement of man and new sin".<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, within its history, the world is transformed dialectically. This can be understood in two senses. Firstly, the possibility within the concrete present is sought and realised under the direction of the hope for the ultimate future so as to negate the injustice of the present. The present is transformed by realising its internal possibility of change. Secondly, the possibility within the concrete present for realising a different future is exhausted so that a radical transformation is needed. The present is transformed by negating it. Either

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<sup>93</sup> *RRF*, p.32.

<sup>94</sup> *FH*, pp.48-49.

sense of transformation is historical not ultimate so that it has to be continuously transcended.

#### 7.4 The Critique of Ideology and Reality

*Praxis* presupposes critique. The revelatory character of the eschatological-dialectical Christ event does not formally awaken humanity's critical consciousness, but with content. The critique offers direction as well as grounding for political *praxis*.

##### 7.4.1 The Realm of Critique

Critique is a preceding moment of *praxis*, but they share the same realm. What is going to be criticized is the same as what is going to be transformed through *praxis*.

M.D. Meeks points out that "in taking up the ancient concept of *theologia politica*, Moltmann means 'politics' in the most comprehensive sense".<sup>95</sup> Although Moltmann "apprehends politics, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, as the inclusive horizon of the life of mankind",<sup>96</sup> he does not limit the realm of politics to socio-political reality. Rather, he writes that the "field of politics designates the extensive field of constructive and

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<sup>95</sup> Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, p.131.

<sup>96</sup> *RRF*, p.98.

destructive possibilities of the appropriation and utilization of nature's power as well as of human relationships by human society".<sup>97</sup>

Politics is an activity of human being, but it does not merely affect the socio-political reality. The natural reality is involved as well. Apparently, against the background of the *eschaton* the whole creation, including the socio-political and natural reality, is going to be transformed ultimately. Correspondingly, the historical transformation of the world involves both the socio-political reality and the natural reality. "Not only man's destiny but also nature's destiny seems to be more and more found in the realm of politics."<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, the object of the critique is not limited to the socio-political reality itself but also its relationship to the natural reality. The point most worth noting is that human being plays a very crucial role within the historical transformation because he or she is the active agent who does not merely construct the socio-political reality but also transforms the natural reality.

#### 7.4.2 The Critique of Christian Theology

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.218.

<sup>98</sup> Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, p.131.

In his "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction" Marx claims that "the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism".<sup>99</sup> Formally similar to Marx<sup>100</sup> Moltmann proceeds the same way in criticising religion. Marx's critique of religion has two senses relating to his two different conceptions of religion.

Firstly, religion is the expression of real misery and protest against real affliction. Secondly, religion is taken as mere fantasy, the opium of the people.<sup>101</sup> Marx's criticism of the latter is negative because such a religion offers an "otherworldly eschatology which provided a merely illusory compensation for human misery and thereby helped to perpetuate the conditions which caused it".<sup>102</sup> However, Marx positively criticises the former as the transfigured reflection of and protest against the real misery.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, "Marx's project was to inherit the religious

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<sup>99</sup> Marx, *Early Writings*, p.243.

<sup>100</sup> FH, p.43. Cf. Migliore, "Biblical Eschatology and Political Hermeneutics", p.123; Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, pp.48-49.

<sup>101</sup> RRF, p.94; Migliore, "Biblical Eschatology and Political Hermeneutics", p.124.

<sup>102</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.48.

<sup>103</sup> FH, p.41.

protest against human misery in the form of political action to change society."<sup>104</sup>

Parallel to Marx, Moltmann, on the one hand, criticises those theologies that perpetuate the *status quo*, or only explain and express misery but do not provoke "revolutionary realisation of freedom within present situation";<sup>105</sup> on the other hand, "finds in messianic Christian faith a protest against real misery and simultaneously ... the categorical imperative for revolutionary realisation of religious concepts in political and economic liberation".<sup>106</sup> In Moltmann's view, "when we understand the cross of Christ ... as an 'expression' of real human affliction, then the resurrection of Christ acquires the significance of the true 'protest' against human affliction."<sup>107</sup> In a word, Moltmann is not content with any theology which ultimately maintains the existing situation but advocates the eschatological Christian faith which arouses revolutionary transformation of the present reality.

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<sup>104</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.44. Cf. Migliore, "Biblical Eschatology and Political Hermeneutics", p.124; *FH*, p.41.

<sup>105</sup> *RRF*, p.95.

<sup>106</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.44. Cf. *RRF*, p.95.

<sup>107</sup> *RRF*, p.96.

It is in this context that Moltmann explicitly criticises existential theology for the flight from affliction into the transcendental subjectivity of human being.<sup>108</sup> However, Moltmann does not merely criticise a certain type of theology. Rather, his spearhead is pointing to all theology that results in maintaining the *status quo*.

For Moltmann, the emergence of such a consequence is not accidental. It is the necessary outcome when Christian theology is treated as pure theory of God. Essentially, pure theory does not claim that God can be seen in the realm of the transitory.<sup>109</sup> Its Platonic analogical principle of knowledge, like is known by like, manifests itself in different schemes of knowledge of God: known by likeness in creation, history, human existence, or in his own Word Jesus Christ.<sup>110</sup> The former two do not take the misery of the world seriously while the latter two notice the suffering world but escape from it into the transcendental realm. In other words, God's analogical way of self-revelation, in different versions, affirms the *status quo* either positively or negatively. They share the same attitude that they do not provoke *praxis* to transform the present world. Or to put it in another way, God does not reveal himself in a way that provokes *praxis* for revolutionary transformation.

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<sup>108</sup> TH, pp.311-316; RRF, pp.94-96 ;M, pp.39-41.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. CG, p.68.

<sup>110</sup> CG, p.26.

However, Moltmann finds in the eschatological-dialectical Christ event that Christian theology is not a pure theory of God but a critical theory of God.<sup>111</sup> This is because "in the crucified Christ, abandoned by God and cursed, faith can find no equivalents of this kind which provide it with an indirect, analogical knowledge of God, but encounters the very contrary".<sup>112</sup> God's self-revelation in the cross is a protesting way of exposing the unspeakable suffering of society and nature. All kinds of analogical knowledge of God must be criticised for their affirmation of the present reality in different ways.

Because God reveals himself in the opposite, the present reality is not the likeness of God. Because God dialectically reveals himself, this world is not to be abandoned and replaced by another one. On the contrary, God's action on the negative in the resurrection does not merely further disclose his protest against the suffering reality, but shows that the present reality has to be transformed. In other words, the dialectical Christ event is precisely to reveal that God will dialectically transform this world as he sublates the crucified Jesus in the resurrection. In this way, Christian theology is not one that neglects the suffering present or escapes from it but one that critically discloses it so as to arouse historical transformation.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p.68.



Here one thing has to be noted. Christian theology becomes pure theory of God because it takes the analogical principle of knowledge as the way of God's self-revelation. In other words, what is ultimately to be criticised is such a principle. However, this does not mean that it should be abandoned. Rather, for Moltmann, analogy "will be possible ultimately in the *eschaton*, when God will be all in all, and when the world will correspond to God's purposes for his creation".<sup>113</sup> However, it is the dialectical principle that makes the analogical principle possible.<sup>114</sup> Dialectic is "the basis and starting point of analogy".<sup>115</sup> In other words, Moltmann criticises that it is inappropriate to apply the analogical principle when the present reality is not analogical to God. Otherwise, the theological consequence will be either sanctioning the *status quo* in nature and society, as in the cosmo-theology and the historico-theology, or leaving the suffering world for a transcendental realm, as in the existential theology and the onto-theology.

For Moltmann, the cross event does not merely criticise Christian theology as analysed above, as a critical theory it "destroys illusions and exposes the falsity of existing

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<sup>113</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.116.

<sup>114</sup> *CG*, p.27.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

society and its values".<sup>116</sup> This is a further critical function of Christian theology when it starts itself with the Christ event.

#### 7.4.3. The Critique of Idolatry and the Correlative Reality

For the Marxists the misery of human being is represented in his political and economic slavery. Therefore, their critique is directed at the political domination of human over human and the economic exploitation of human by human.<sup>117</sup> What they are concerned with is simply human being's not-yet-realised possibilities.<sup>118</sup> When such possibilities are fully realised, the misery of human being will be overcome. They do not further ask the negative element which hinders or obstructs the realisation of the possibilities of reality.

However, Moltmann does not merely share the critique of the real misery of humankind in the political and economic sphere with the Marxists. He goes further to point out that besides suffering from the economic exploitation of man by man and the political oppression of man by man "people are suffering from the cultural alienation of man from man through racism and sexual discrimination ... the emptiness

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<sup>116</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.66.

<sup>117</sup> RRF, p.78.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

of their personal life, which disappears so meaninglessly among the structures of a technocratic and bureaucratic society".<sup>119</sup> These different forms of suffering in the present reality all have their root in sin and death.

For Moltmann human misery has its profounder sense: "He is enslaved under the domination of sin, that is, the failure of life because of selfishness and fear. He is handed over to death, transitoriness, and nothingness."<sup>120</sup> Besides political domination and economic exploitation, cultural alienation and meaninglessness of life, Christian sees slavery to sin and death as the deeper human misery. This slavery to sin and death is not just another kind of human misery. Rather, it is precisely this misery that makes such domination, exploitation, alienation and meaninglessness happen. It is this deeply ingrained primal fear of death and nothingness which makes people so aggressive and inhuman towards other in social, political, economic spheres.<sup>121</sup>

In this sense, Moltmann writes: "Death is the evil power already existing in life's midst, not just at its end."<sup>122</sup> He goes on: "Here is the economic death of the starving, there the political death of the oppressed. Here

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<sup>119</sup> *FC*, p.97. Cf. *CG*, pp.329-332.

<sup>120</sup> *RRF*, p.142.

<sup>121</sup> *FC*, p.96.

<sup>122</sup> *EG*, p.32.

is the social death of the handicapped; there the noisy death through bombs; and here again the silent death of petrified soul."<sup>123</sup> All these different forms of death in the midst of life manifest themselves through different forms of idolatry which arises out of the anxiety of death.

Under the threat of death and nothingness, human beings practise different forms of idolatry in order to secure themselves. That is, idolatry is humanity's mediated activity through which one tries to escape from the threat of death and nothingness. However, every form of idolatry in turn constructs a correlative reality in which the human being suffers from different forms of misery. Furthermore, for Moltmann, not only do human beings cry out from being exploited, oppressed, alienated and fragmented, but nature cries out from being turned into material for human beings' exploiting domination.<sup>124</sup> In other words, human beings construct a reality which does not merely enslave themselves but also dominates and distorts the natural reality.

In the context of the fact that "Marx identified his critique of religion as the 'beginning of every critique'", Moltmann understands that his "analysis of religion is an

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.98.

analysis of idolatry."<sup>125</sup> He goes on to point out that Marx's later critique of capitalism follows the same principle.<sup>126</sup> Idolatry emerges in the religious sphere as well as in the political and economic sphere. However, Moltmann does not just confine himself to the analysis of different forms of idolatry in depth. Rather, he goes further to analyse and criticise the deep structure of idolatry itself.

As observed by G. Hunsinger, for Moltmann, "anxiety (*Angst*) ... is the root cause of idolatry, including such modern forms as racism, anti-Communism, and the arrogance of power".<sup>127</sup> This is not an ordinary anxiety but one that springs from the deeply ingrained primal fear of death and nothingness. This is why human beings need the idols which are projected as omnipotent and eternal, incapable of suffering and dying so as to help impotent and mortal man.<sup>128</sup> Moltmann stresses: "The religion of anxiety runs straight through all the public religions that we know. It also runs straight through the ideologies and institutions that we have. It is a widespread phenomenon."<sup>129</sup> In other

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<sup>125</sup> CCR, p.38.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. EH, p.113.

<sup>127</sup> G. Hunsinger, "The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence: A Critical Survey of Jüngel Moltmann's Recent Thought: II", *Heythrop Journal* 24/4 (1973), pp.384-386. Cf. CCR, p.37; EH, pp.112-113; CG, p.302.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. CG, p.303.

<sup>129</sup> CG, p.302.

words, all spheres of human activity, either political or economic, cultural or ecological, are permeated by such an anxiety. Therefore different idolatries emerge in different spheres.

Moltmann, on the one hand, inherits Luther's analysis of idolatry, on the other hand, goes beyond Luther by introducing a psychological analysis of idolatry. Luther follows Paul's analysis of justification by works. Paul does not merely take up the Second Commandment of the Old Testament prohibition of images, but transforms it in the criticism of "works righteousness".<sup>130</sup> That is, the human being "not only makes images of gods and so serves the creature instead of the creator, but also divinizes everything that he does in order to appear to live righteously, compelled to do this by his desire for self-justification".<sup>131</sup> "Therefore, argues Paul, justification by works is idolatry."<sup>132</sup> Luther goes on to expose that idolatry is "not only in the worship of idol but preeminently in the heart that seeks help and comfort from creatures, saints and devil but 'receives not God himself'".<sup>133</sup> Then idolatry is a way of gaining self-confirmation and self-security so as to release one from

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<sup>130</sup> *EH*, p.112; *CCR*, p.36.

<sup>131</sup> *CCR*, p.36; cf. *EH*, p.112.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

his or her unfathomable anxiety, though it cannot really make one free from his or her insecurity.

Nevertheless, idolatry has its deeper psychological reason and serious effect on the constructing of one's reality. It is in this context that Moltmann goes further to analyse idolatry from a psychological point of view. In the practise of idolatry, in whatever form, human beings identify the symbols, idols, and values which they create with themselves so as to confirm their existence.<sup>134</sup> Actually, an idol is the projection of one's anxiety self. Then, one's identification with the idol is merely an identification with one's idolised self. Furthermore, according to Moltmann, "this inner compulsion to idolise the self is a cramping self-justification that invariably leads to the oppression of those who are 'other'",<sup>135</sup> those who are different from oneself. Thus, two consequences of human relationship happen.

On the one hand, as Moltmann points out: "He loves only what is like and only acknowledges people who believe, think, love and do the things that he does."<sup>136</sup> This is because "people like himself support him, and he needs this support to suppress his anxiety".<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p.37; *EH*, p.112.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>136</sup> *CG*, p.302; cf. *EH*, p.112.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, "he remains unfree to affirm ... the very different life of another".<sup>138</sup> This is because "people who differ from him disturb him ... question his idols and laws and thus his world",<sup>139</sup> "put him in question and make him uncertain".<sup>140</sup> In a word, "those who live very differently threaten his idolised self".<sup>141</sup>

Here Aristotle's principle of society "like seeks after like" dominates one's relationship to the other. Idolatry does not merely mean the human's worship of idol, but the human's seeking after like and oppressing of unlike. "So he loves only those who are like him, and hates other man."<sup>142</sup> This is why all forms of idolatry, either political domination or economic exploitation, cultural alienation or ecological crisis, are only different forms of oppression in different spheres. Through the psychological analysis of idolatry, Moltmann exposes the underlying principle that governs the present reality in which some people are oppressed by other people who are enslaved by those idols they have made. In this way, society is constructed as an alienated reality.

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<sup>138</sup> CCR, p.37; cf. CG, p.302.

<sup>139</sup> CG, p.302.

<sup>140</sup> EH, p.112.

<sup>141</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.73.

<sup>142</sup> CG, p.302.



Furthermore, when people relate themselves to nature according to the same principle, the result is that they conquer nature instead of co-operating with nature. In other words, people change nature as object according to their own will but do not consider it as the human's environment with respect.<sup>143</sup> They adopt a master-servant model to relate themselves to nature.<sup>144</sup> This model allows people to impose their power over nature so as to change it in accord with their interest alone. In this process "the sciences, together with technologies, have grown up out of particular human concerns"<sup>145</sup> which never take nature's own interest into account seriously. Consequently, nature is destroyed in favour of human's own advantage either in the capitalist societies or in the socialist industrial states. However, since nature is the environment of human being,<sup>146</sup> its destruction brought by human being in turn has "a destructive retroactive effect on the societies themselves, evoking a loss of values and crises of meaning'.<sup>147</sup>

Therefore, the critique of idolatry has a profound implication of criticising the social principle which constructs the present reality. In Moltmann's view, the crucified one as the image of the invisible God forsakes

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. *CG*, p.334.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *GC*, p.23.

<sup>146</sup> *CG*, p.334.

<sup>147</sup> *GC*, p.24. Cf. *CG*, p.334.

and destroys all earthly images and representations of the divine in all spheres. The cross even directly negates the analogical principle of society. Of this, Moltmann writes:

... for the crucified Christ, the principle of fellowship is fellowship with those who are different, and solidarity with those who have become alien and have been made different. Its power is not friendship, the love for what is similar and beautiful (*philia*), but creative love for what is different, alien and ugly (*agape*).<sup>148</sup>

On the one hand, God's self-negation in the cross makes a person "ready to accept his humanity, his freedom and his mortality".<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, God's negation of negation in the resurrection releases people from their anxiety of death and nothingness. They can "learn to accept themselves and to accept the 'other'".<sup>150</sup> They can open themselves to suffering and to love.<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, "Jesus died *the death of all the living* ... Through his death struggle he participated in the fate of everything that lives - not merely the fate of human beings; for all living things desire to live and have to die".<sup>152</sup> In the cross Jesus even dies for the natural world. This means that God's relationship to nature is not

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<sup>148</sup> CG, p.28.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.303.

<sup>150</sup> Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, p.73.

<sup>151</sup> CG, p.303.

<sup>152</sup> WJC, p.168.

that between lord and slave. Nature is not the tool and property of God but the object he loves. The resurrection of Christ as the resurrection of nature points to the cosmic horizon of expectation that nature is not subjected to human being but "a brotherly and sisterly relationship to fellow-creatures will spring up".<sup>153</sup> Then the natural world is not an object to conquer and dominate and exploit but to fellowship with in mutual perichoresis. In this way, the model of master-servant which allows human beings to impose their will on the natural world without any respect for its otherness, along with the corresponding reality, are both criticised and negated.

In a word, for Moltmann, the resurrection is "God's great protest against death"<sup>154</sup> and "against all the manifold forms of evil and suffering which death takes already in the midst of life".<sup>155</sup>

To sum it up, Moltmann criticises the concrete present reality through his critique of idolatry. However, he does not merely expose the idolatrous character in different spheres of human activity, but further goes on to analyse the deep structure of idolatry itself and its way of constructing correlative reality. Although there are

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., pp.270-273. Cf. *GC*, p.186.

<sup>154</sup> *EG*, p.31.

<sup>155</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", p.205.

different modern forms of idolatry, their emergence is no accident and is rooted in people's deeper anxiety and fear of death and nothingness. It follows that the analogical principle of society and the master-slave model become their underlying ideology of treating the others, human beings and nature respectively. That is, the present reality is constructed according to such a principle and model so that some people are oppressed by other people and the natural world is oppressed by human beings. However, the cross and the resurrection renounce such ideology as falsity and disclose that the oppressing relationship of human beings to human beings, human beings to nature has to be replaced by another kind of relationship, fellowship with one another. The Christ event criticises the present reality and reveals the ideal reality simultaneously. This in turn provides a direction for the human's *praxis* for the historical transformation of this world.

#### 7.5 Conclusion

Moltmann writes: "Christian eschatology is ... not only receptive but also productive, not only passive but also militant hope for the future."<sup>156</sup> On the one hand, the ultimate future is not built with human hands but comes towards this world from God.<sup>157</sup> On the other hand, one can

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<sup>156</sup> *FH*, p.46.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

change the historical present into a different historical future because the ultimate future already promised in the Christ event contains initiative for the transformation of the world. This has three senses.

Ontologically, the reality of the world becomes historically transformable when an ultimate future is promised to the world by God. Its culmination in the dialectical Christ event expresses that this world is not abandoned but sublated. This has two senses. Firstly, this world is not unchangeable. Secondly, it is not to be replaced by another world. It is this eschatological-dialectical transformability that makes this world historically changeable. A different historical future which relatively corresponds to the not-yet reached ultimate future, then, is possible for this world. In this way, human *praxis* can take place in front of "the universal eschatological horizon which the resurrection of Jesus projects".<sup>158</sup>

At the same time, the eschatological-dialectical Christ event awakes the human being's protest and critical consciousness through its revelation of the reality of this world, the present and the ultimate future. On the one hand, the difference between these two makes one aware that the present reality can be and should be transformed. On

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<sup>158</sup> Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited", pp.204-205.

the other hand, the way of God's revelation of the reality of this world, that is, the cross and the resurrection, provokes human beings' protest against the present reality so as to transform this world.

Furthermore, the Christ event simultaneously discloses and falsifies the deep structure of the present reality and offers a direction for the transformation in the history of the world. In other words, the Christ event criticises the present reality not formally but with content. God's act in the Christ event destroys all forms of idolatry in the modern society and criticises the correlative realities. Actually, idolatry itself as the projection of people's anxiety of death and nothingness has a very profound effect on human beings relationship to human beings and their natural environment. It makes people adopting analogical principle and master-slave model while constructing the present reality in different spheres to cause different modes of death, either political or economic, cultural or ecological. However, in the cross God's self-revelation in the opposite is at the same time his fellowship and communion with this forsaken world. He does not follow the analogical principle to reveal himself and to communicate with other. God's act in the Christ event presents another kind of relationships which will constructs a different reality. It criticises both the Christian theology and the ideology which allows the analogical principle is taken as the principle of constructing reality. Consequently, it

follows that the historical transformation of this world is a process of abolishing the relationships which are dominated by the analogical principle and establishing new relationships according to the dialectical principle as shown in the Christ event, a process of abolishing different modes of death and establishing a different reality of life.

In this way, the history of this world is initiated in the direction of corresponding to the ultimate future.

## 8 Conclusion: God Has a History

### 8.1 An Analytical Summary

#### 8.1.1 Approach to God's History

##### 8.1.1.1 Starting Point: God's Concrete Act

God has a history. However, in Moltmann's theology, God's history is not understood in terms of itself. That is, Moltmann does not talk of God's history as such, or God's history in general. If one talks of God's history in this way, then one will confine his or her discussion to the ontological level, that is, to God's being alone. It follows that such a kind of discussion of God's history is merely about his ontological movement in eternity.

On the contrary, Moltmann considers that God's being must be understood in terms of his concrete activity in the history. He does not start from the being of God but rather from the act of God. He does not start from God's act as such but from God's concrete historical act of self-revelation. This has two senses. Firstly, one can talk of God only when God reveals himself by himself. Secondly, one can talk of God's history only when God reveals himself in the history of the world by himself.



#### 8.1.1.2 Framework: Revelation as Promise

However, Moltmann does not consider that God reveals himself merely for the sake of self-disclosure. It is when God reveals the future for the world that he reveals himself. This kind of revelation is manifested in the form of promise. When God reveals the future of the world in the promise, he at the same time reveals himself. God's self-revelation and his revelation of the future of the world are two sides of one coin.

The consequence of such a kind of God's self-revelation is that God is present in the future reality analogically. This does not merely mean that God is not present in the present reality analogically, but also implies that God is not known or revealed in any kind of "present" or "eternal" analogue, either nature or history, human existence or God's logos. In this way, it denies all forms of God's self-revelation in the epiphany. God's being, then, is not understood as eternal presence.

God's promise becomes eschatological when it ultimately points to the *eschaton* in which death and nothingness will be totally overcome and a wholly new reality of this world will be created. For Moltmann, God gives this promise to the world not merely in his words but also in the Christ event. In other words, the Christ event has to be understood within the framework of God's self-revelation as

promise. God's revelation in the promissory Christ event means that God reveals the eschatological future of this world through his concrete act in history. This at the same time reveals that God is not merely a God of the future but also a God of the present. Furthermore, as the promise the Christ event is dialectically structured as well. It is precisely because of this dialectical structure, that God's future and present are not identical with one another but the former negates the latter so that God's history is initiated dialectically.

In this way, God's revelation as promise is a necessary framework in understanding that God has a history.

#### 8.1.1.3 Centre: The Christ Event

In Moltmann's theology the Christ event is the centre of understanding God's history from the very beginning to the end. As the culmination of God's promise to the world, God's concrete act in the Christ event is the climax of his participation in and the beginning of his salvific act for the suffering history of this world. Its dialectical structure, that is, the dialectic of the cross and the resurrection, discloses God's deepest dialectical presence in the world. Therefore the Christ event is the unique event through which God's history from the origin to the goal can be derived.

Accordingly, the cross and the resurrection, on the one hand, point back to God's initial involvement with the world; on the other hand, they point forward to God's ultimate liberation of the world. This means that God's history does not only happen in the Christ event but starts from his creation and finishes at the *eschaton*. Basing on the dialectic in the Christ event, Moltmann goes on to derive not only God's dialectical history between the origin and the goal but also God's initial and ultimate dialectical movement in the moments of creation and recreation respectively.

Moreover, grasping the Christ event as a trinitarian event, Moltmann further takes God's history with the world as a trinitarian one in which the three persons interact with one another dialectically for the sake of this suffering world. God's history, then, is not merely dialectical, but dialectical trinitarian from the very beginning.

Obviously, the underlying principle of inferring from the Christ event to God's history from the initial moment to the ultimate moment is a principle of correspondence. For Moltmann, this principle can be applied in understanding of God's nature as well: "The *missio ad extra* reveals the *missio ad intra*. The *missio ad intra* is the foundation of the *missio ad extra*."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FC, p.84; CPS, p.54.

### 8.1.2 From God's History to God's Historicity

#### 8.1.2.1 God's History as Dialectical and Other-Related

God's history is inseparable from the history of this world, in both a noetic sense and an ontic sense. Noetically, one cannot understand God's history apart from the history of the world because God's history in the revelatory Christ event is a history with this world. Ontically, from the very beginning God does not merely start his history along with world history but interweaves with it by participating in the history of the world dialectically.

In a word, God's history is not self-related but other-related. God's other-related history is simultaneously a dialectical one. This is not accidental. Obviously, God's acts of creating the world, liberating the world and transforming the world are dialectical. To put it in another way, all these dialectical acts are related to the world. They are other-related but not self-related. God relates himself to the world in a dialectical way.

However, this does not mean that the world as the other is God's self-negation, that is, the otherness of God. For Moltmann, this world is not understood in a Hegelian sense. The world as the other is essentially different from God

himself but not the self-negation of the Absolute Spirit. Therefore there is not any Hegelian dialectical relationship between God and the world.

It is precisely because the world is different from God in nature that God has to move dialectically so as to relate himself to it. In Moltmann's term the world is God's like in the other but not his other in the like. Furthermore, under the threat of death and nothingness the like in the other becomes the unlike in the other. Therefore, God cannot relate himself to the unlike in the other in an analogical way but only in a dialectical way.

God's dialectical history with the world is his self-limitation and self-de-limitation in his indwelling in and identifying himself with the creation, preserving and transforming the world. God's dialectical movement in the history is the act of withdrawing and de-withdrawing his glory for the sake of the unlike in the other.

In Moltmann's theology, God's other-relatedness is manifested in God's dialectical movement. Apart from his dialectical movement there is no other-relatedness of God. Conversely, other-relatedness is the essence of God's dialectical movement. These two things in God's history are inter-connected. In this sense, God's history is a dialectical history with the world.

#### 8.1.2.2 God's History as Confronting Nothingness and Self-Differentiating

God's dialectical history with the world is a history of confronting Nothingness as well. In the course of confronting Nothingness, God differentiates himself that the utmost intimate fellowship within the divine life among the three persons turns into separation. Likewise, God's self-differentiation and his confrontation of Nothingness are inseparable.

Because Nothingness as the annihilating power permeates the world to make it the unlike in the other, God's dialectical act in the history is an act of confronting this annihilating power unavoidably. God's dialectical acts of indwelling in and preserving the creation, identifying with and transforming the world mean not merely that the triune God interacts with the world but further that the triune God encounters the annihilating power.

God's encounter with Nothingness is not immediate but mediate. This has two senses. Firstly, God negates himself by self-limitation so as to indwell in and identify with the suffering world. In this way, God enters not merely the world but Nothingness. However, God does not directly enter Nothingness to negate it. Rather, he enters Nothingness through participating in the world. In this way, God's

overcoming Nothingness in the preservation of the world and the resurrection of Christ is a promise to the world.

Secondly, God's encounter with Nothingness is a dialectical trinitarian event. The three divine persons do not indwell in and identify with the world altogether. This follows that they do not enter Nothingness altogether. As seen in the Christ event, it is only the Son who directly enters into Nothingness. Likewise, in the creation it is only the Holy Spirit who indwells in the creation so as to share its suffering from the threat of annihilation.

However, in the Christ event it is not only the Son who suffers separation from the Father but also the Father who suffers separation from the Son as well. Furthermore, in this deepest separation and bifurcation the Holy Spirit shares their suffering through holding them together. In other words, through the Son's dialectical act the divine life within the triune God is affected. Through Jesus Christ the triune God exposes himself to Nothingness. Apparently, such a kind of dialectical trinitarian event is a process of God's self-differentiation in the sense that the three persons suffer from separation in different ways.

When the triune God relates himself to the world dialectically, he inevitably involves himself in the confrontation with Nothingness. When the triune God confronts Nothingness, his intra-divine life is unavoidably

differentiated. In this way, God's dialectical history with the world is a history of confrontation with Nothingness and self-differentiation within the divine triune life.

#### 8.1.2.3 God's History: Suffering and Liberating with the World

The triune God encounters Nothingness which threatens the existence of the world through participating in the world dialectically. This explicitly means that the kind of annihilating power which God and the world face is the same. However, the most significant point is that God suffers in the same way with the world. Because God suffers in the same way with the world, his destiny is interwoven with that of the world.

Within the annihilating power of Nothingness the world suffers from godforsakenness whereas the triune God experiences the pain of separation in his intra-differentiation. Both of them are in a situation of bifurcation of relationships. Therefore God's suffering with the world means that God shares the same relationlessness of death with the world in his acts in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and in the cross of Jesus Christ.

However, God's suffering with the world is not the end of his dialectical history but the act preceding his



negation of negation. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit precedes the glorification of the Holy Spirit whereas the cross precedes the resurrection. God's acts of self-negation or self-limitation is the acts of exposing himself to Nothingness so as to overcome it in his subsequent acts of negation of negation or self-de-limitation. God's suffering with the world is the prelude of his liberation with the world. In this way, the breaking of relationships will be reconciled with the abolishment of Nothingness.

Here, one point should be noted. All God's acts of negation of negation in history are not ultimate but pointing to the ultimate. God's acts in the resurrection of the Christ and the transfiguration of the Holy Spirit are merely the starting point of overcoming Nothingness. That is, the annihilating power is not completely abolished in the history. The world is still under the threat of being annihilated. In this way, his liberation of the world from suffering in the history is merely temporary and a foretaste of the ultimate deliverance. God has to continue his struggle against Nothingness with the world in the history until the ultimate *eschaton*.

In this sense, God's dialectical history with the world is a history open towards the ultimate eschatological future in which both God and the world are delivered from the suffering history by radically overcoming the annihilating power of Nothingness. Meanwhile, the triune

God will reach an intimate communion not merely among the three divine persons of the triune God but between God and the world: God is in the world and the world is in God.

#### 8.1.2.4 God's Historicity: Dialectical Love

The history of God leads one to ask about the conditions of possibility for such an event.<sup>2</sup> "It is talk about the orientation in God to history."<sup>3</sup> Then one talks not only about God's history but about God's historicity. God's historicity as the inner being of God does not merely serve as the grounding of God's history but also determines the character of God's history. However, for Moltmann, God's historicity cannot be known by speculation but must be derived from his concrete history. In other words, the character of God's history has to be clarified firstly so that his historicity can be derived transcendentally from it.

As mentioned above God's history is dialectical and other-related, confronting Nothingness and self-differentiating, suffering and liberating with the world. In sum, God's history is a dialectical history open to the other, to suffer with the other and to liberate with the other in the future. Therefore God must be an other-

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<sup>2</sup> J.J. O'Donnell, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Recent German Theology", *Heythrop Journal* 23/2 (1982), p.159.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

related, suffering and liberating God. In Moltmann's theology such a God can be understood only in terms of love. God as love is the ontological condition of possibility for God's dialectical history with the world.

When God's inner being is understood as love, his relationship to the world is not a kind of dependence. God does not need or depend on the world to realise himself. His love is the overflowing of his goodness in which God is free to be himself. Since the world as the other is necessary as the beloved when God overflows his goodness, the other-relatedness of God's love is the essential nature of God's historicity. Because God and the world are essentially different from each other, his other-relatedness is dialectical. That is, God's love is dialectical so that he can relate himself to the world which is different from him.

In other words, corresponding to the dialectical character of God's history with the world, God's love is dialectical also. This dialectical love is structured in terms of suffering love and creative love. God's suffering love means that for the sake of the world God limits himself in history by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so as to preserve the existence of the world, and by the Son's identification with the world so as to enter into its forsaken situation. God's creative love means that for the sake of the world God begins to de-limit himself in history

by raising the crucified Christ from death and transforming the suffering world through the Holy Spirit. In a word, God's dialectical love determines that the triune God goes out of himself to relate himself with the world dialectically. The historicity as the condition for God's history then is to be understood as his dialectical love.

### 8.1.3 The Grounding of Hope and *Praxis* in the World

When God's history is a dialectical history with the world, the world has a history. This means that the world has a historical future for it to pursue and realise. God's history with the world is the grounding of the history of the world.

Ontologically, the reality of the world is open to the eschatological future as revealed and grounded in the Christ event. This world will not be replaced by another world but sublated into a totally new reality of the world. In this way, the reality of the world is eschatologically transformable. The Christian does not hope for another world but another reality of the same world. In front of the eschatological future every concrete present is not ultimate and fixed but historically transformable. That is, a different future within history is open for the world to realise through *praxis*.

Practically, people's critical consciousness is aroused when God reveals himself in the dialectical Christ event. *Praxis* is further provoked to transform the present reality so that it will relatively correspond to the ultimate future. Therefore it is possible for people to hope for a better historical future by involving in the critique of and the transformation of the present reality of the world.

God's dialectical act in history simultaneously determines that *praxis* and transformation within history are not once for all but a continuous process. Because the annihilating power of death and nothingness is not totally overcome in history, every concrete endeavour and struggle for a concrete historical future will be negated at a certain moment. However, this does not abolish the possibility of historical transformation until the ultimate transformation in the *eschaton*. Then the critique of and the transformation of all modes of death appearing in ideology and the correlative reality are to be put in *praxis*.

In sum, God's dialectical history with the world creates the objective and subjective conditions for the historical transformation of the world. God's revealing and grounding the ultimate future for the world in his history does not merely give hope to the world to live on, but also awakes people's critical consciousness and provokes their

transformation for a historical future relatively corresponding to the ultimate future.

## 8.2 An Appreciative Appraisal

### 8.2.1 One History, not Two

Moltmann is one of the contemporary systematic theologians who take history and eschatology as the themes when developing his own theology. Obviously, his understanding of history is very different from K. Barth's and R. Bultmann's. Basically, he is not content with the fact that they take different strategies to protect God and his history from being objectified while abandoning the world and its history. Rather he re-affirms the historicity of the world without dispensing with the subjectivity of God. In this sense, he is post-Barthian and post-Bultmannian.

Barth contrasts God's history as *Geschichte* which is determined by *Urgeschichte* with the history of the world as *Historie*. Although God touches the world by not touching it in his self-revelation, the history of Jesus Christ in the world is an eternal recapitulation of what God already is. While Barth locates God's history in *Geschichte* but not in *Historie*, Bultmann dissolves God's history into the historicity of human existence. Bultmann contrasts the

history of authentic existence as *Geschichte* with that of inauthentic existence as *Historie*. He takes the latter as secondary which is derived from humanity's authentic existence. Either case proposes a view-point of dual tracks of history. Moltmann goes beyond this.

Moltmann abolishes these dual tracks of history by understanding God's self-revelation in the form of promise for the future of the world. The result is that both God and the world have a shared future for the former to fulfill and for the latter to pursue. Actually Moltmann justifies the historicity of the world through asking and answering the question which is neglected by Barth and Bultmann: What is the condition of the possibility of the history of the world? When Moltmann anchors the history of the world in God's promise for the world, he indeed grounds it in God's history because God's promise culminates itself in the Christ event. In essence, God in the Christ event does not experience a history which is different from that of this world; rather he shares all the negatives with it. God's history is not his movement in eternity but suffering with and overcoming suffering with the world. Therefore, there are not two histories but only one history which is shared by both God and the world. In this way, Moltmann overcomes Barth's and Bultmann's dualism of history and stands in line with the view-point of liberation theology.

#### 8.2.2 Dialectical Christology and Soteriology

Moltmann is the contemporary systematic theologian who employs Hegel's dialectic in understanding God's history in the Christ event. He does not merely inherit M. Luther's theology of the cross but integrates it in his dialectical Christology through the Hegelian dialectic.

Instead of starting with the traditional doctrine of the two natures of divinity-humanity, Moltmann follows Luther in concentrating on God's concrete historical act in the cross event and integrates the cross with the resurrection by means of Hegel's dialectic. In this way, Moltmann arrives at a new understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ: an identity in the total contradiction of death and life, cross and resurrection.

Because of its dialectical nature, such a Christology is not merely a doctrine about the identity of Jesus Christ but involves Soteriology as well. Or to put it in this way, that who Jesus Christ is cannot be separated from that what Jesus Christ does to this world in history. God's soteriological act in the Christ event is not one that has no influence on God the son. Rather God's self-negation and negation of negation in the Christ event precisely expresses that God's inner divine life is involved. In this sense, Moltmann's contribution is that he establishes an internal relationship between Christology and Soteriology through Hegel's dialectic.



Within this dialectical framework Moltmann understands that God the Son is wholly dead on the cross and wholly raised in the resurrection. On the one hand, Moltmann opens a way of affirming that God can suffer even unto death. He makes the theme "suffering God" be "the new orthodoxy" in the late twentieth century. On the other hand, Moltmann offers a contemporary version of G. Aulén's classic theory of the atonement which has been abandoned for a long time.

When the death of Jesus Christ is understood as God's self-negation in a Hegelian sense, Moltmann goes beyond the limitation of the doctrine of the two natures of divinity-humanity. It is only when God the Son is wholly dead that he can enter the Nothingness so as to overcome it in his resurrection. In this sense, Moltmann's dialectical understanding of the Christ event seems to be a commentary of D. Bonhoeffer's famous and often-quoted statement: "The Bible directs us to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, while Aulén describes the classic theory of the atonement in mythological terms<sup>5</sup> that "the risen Christ had brought new possibilities of life to humanity through his victory over

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<sup>4</sup> D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. R.H. Fuller, F. Clarke, J. Bowden (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p.361.

<sup>5</sup> C. Gunton, "Christus Victor Revisited. A Study in Metaphor and the Transformation of Meaning", *Journal of Theological Studies* 36/1 (1985), p.129.

the powers of evil",<sup>6</sup> Moltmann employs Hegel's dialectic, self-negation and negation of negation, to express the battle between God and the annihilating power of Nothingness. In this way, while Aulén is criticised for offering "no rational justification for the manner in which the forces of evil are defeated through the cross [and the resurrection] of Christ",<sup>7</sup> this theory provides a new version with sufficient rational justification in Moltmann's dialectical Christology and Soteriology.

Furthermore, the most significant point of Moltmann's dialectical Christology and Soteriology is its eschatological nature. In contrast to any version of Soteriology which neglects the eschatological dimension Moltmann emphasises that there is something which has yet to happen. This is because the dialectic of the Christ event is open to the eschatological future in which all negative element will be abolished. Moltmann's proper use of Hegel's dialectic in his Christology and Soteriology shows that both God and the world have the same history to go through.

### 8.2.3 Trinitarian Panentheism

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<sup>6</sup> A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.347. Cf. G. Aulén, *Christus Victor: A Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A.G. Hebert (London: SPCK, 1931), pp.4, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.348.

Moltmann is one of the contemporary theologians who revitalise the doctrine of the Trinity. However, Moltmann differs from Barth, who develops the doctrine of the Trinity in eternity, in that he does not isolate his understanding of the Trinity from the dialectical Christ event in history. That is, he abandons any speculative thinking about the Trinity but starts with the concrete historical act of the triune God. Moltmann reverses the traditional approach which begins with the unity of God and then goes on to ask about the Trinity. Such an approach leads inescapably to the reduction of the doctrine of the Trinity to monotheism. On the contrary, Moltmann begins with the Trinity of the persons, that is, the affirmation of the distinct subjectivity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and goes on to ask about the unity. This result in a trinitarian panentheism.

This trinitarian panentheism goes beyond theism and pantheism. On the one hand, the traditional theism separates the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity, God from the world too much. On the other hand, pantheism abolishes the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, God and the world. The crucial point lies in the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity and the relationship between God and the world.

In contrast to the traditional theism which allows only a one way relationship of the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity, God to the world, Moltmann proposes that their relationship is two way. In other words, while the influence of the triune God on the world is maintained, the retroactive effect of the world on the triune God is allowed. However, Moltmann holds a balance between these two so as to avoid dissolving the triune God into the history of the world. Otherwise, pantheism emerges and there will be no difference between God and the world. The reciprocal relationship leads to the trinitarian panentheism: the difference between God and the world is not abolished while God participates in the world and is affected by the world. In sum, Moltmann reshapes Christianity as a trinitarian panentheism which provides a proper understanding of the appropriate relationship between God and the world.

This is significant for the response to protest atheism: God is not indifferent to the suffering world but rather takes up the suffering of the world into God's being in the trinitarian dialectical Christ event. One can even speak of the death of God in the trinitarian framework in the sense of the death of Jesus Christ. God's omnipotence and omnipresence then is understood totally differently from that of traditional theism and protest atheism. In this trinitarian panentheism, omnipotence means that God is capable of suffering and overcoming suffering; omnipresence

means that God can be present in death and Nothingness and takes up it in his being. In this way, Moltmann reaches the concept of the absolute God in the Hegelian sense that an absolute God is a God who is not excluded from his opposite but integrates it in his being.

Furthermore, Moltmann is the first theologian in the twentieth century to emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian history of God with the world. The Holy Spirit in Moltmann's trinitarian panentheism is not merely a bond of love between the Father and the Son but the person who preserves God's creation by indwelling in it and transforms it starting with the resurrection of the Son. Actually, Moltmann offers a very contributive discussion of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by displaying that the Holy Spirit is another distinct subject having intimate communion and interaction with the other two and playing different roles in different stages of God's history with the world.

#### 8.2.4 Human *Praxis* in the World

Moltmann is one of the contemporary theologians who emphasise human *praxis* in the world for transforming history. Firstly, he establishes that *praxis* is a necessary critical moment of eschatological faith. Secondly, he allocates human being's endeavour of changing the world a proper place. On the one hand, the possibility of

eschatological and historical change is not inherent in the world itself but is given by God in the Christ event. On the other hand, although the eschatological future is realised in the *eschaton* by the triune God alone, humanity can undertake historical transformation which relatively corresponds to the eschatological future by realising the historical possibility continuously. In this way, Moltmann holds a very good balance and relationship between God's eschatological transformation and humanity's historical transformation.

Such a conception of human *praxis* opens a way for dialogue with M. Horkheimer's, T.W. Adorno's, H. Marcuse's and J. Habermas' Critical Theory. While Moltmann shares with Critical Theory the same interest in the emancipation of modern society from various ideologies and oppressing reality, he further provides a theological grounding for humanity's *praxis* which is lacked in the latter. Because Critical Theory tends to de-metaphysicise the foundation of socio-political *praxis* but focuses on the immanent critique of the conditions for oppression, alienation, estrangement, it avoids the problem: How is it possible for humanity's socio-political *praxis* when all earthy possibilities are swallowed in nothingness? In other words, Critical Theory does not take the power of evil or nothingness into account radically adequately. This is precisely the area in which Moltmann's eschatological theology emerges.

### 8.3 Conclusion

Moltmann's theology as a whole is impregnated with a sense of that God has a history. Moltmann's theology as a whole is intertwined by many significant breakthroughs and profound insights into various Christian doctrines. All these breakthroughs and insights indeed can be seen as different threads interwoven in a picture of God's history. This history is not a history of God himself alone but a history with the world. In this history God does not only affect the world but allows himself to be affected by the world. Simply it is a history of interaction and interplay. As Moltmann writes in *The Way of Jesus Christ*: "History is what takes place between God and human beings, human beings and God."<sup>8</sup> Through this history, God is all in all: God *in* the world and the world *in* God.

<sup>8</sup> WJC, p.245.

## Abbreviations

CCR	"The Cross and Civil Religion"
CG	The Crucified God
CPS	The Church in the Power of the Spirit
DGG	Diskussion Über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch »Der gekreuzigte Gott«, ed. M. Walker
EG	Experience of God
EH	The Experiment of Hope
FH	The Future of Hope, ed. F. Herzog
GC	God in Creation
HFM	"Hope and the Biomedical Future of Man"
HD	On Human Dignity
HP	Hope and Planning
HTG	History and the Triune God
M	Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present
OC	The Open Church
RRF	Religion, Revolution and the Future
TH	Theology of Hope
TKG	The Trinity and the Kingdom of God
TT	Theology Today
TTC	"The 'Crucified God': A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross"
WJC	The Way of Jesus Christ
FC	The Future of Creation

## Bibliography

This is a working bibliography including two main parts. The first part consists of books and articles by Moltmann, interviews, and books and articles on Moltmann. The second part consists of other theological and philosophical books and articles.

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